

Wednesday 2/4/26 - Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
SB1507 Decouple Oregon's Tax Rate from the Federal Tax Rate(Virtual)

Good morning Chairs Broadman, Vice-Chair McLane, and members of the committee,

Thank you for having us. My name is Maya Pueo von Geldern, I am a PTA leader, a community organizer and board member of Community & Parents for Public Schools, but most importantly, a parent of two students in the Portland School District.

Every decision that is made in Salem makes me question - how will this affect Oregon's children. For years we have advocated everywhere from our school building to our district offices, to the steps of the Capitol for **fully funded schools**. And since being written into our constitution, we have never funded a quality education. Instead this year we are funded to Current Service Levels again, or CSL, which leaves us nothing close to what we could provide the year before, due to inflation, PERS and the growing needs of our students. Our class sizes are too big, our buildings are crumbling, and we're losing services that are dire to students' success.

I was a public school student in my home state through elementary school until my family gave up and sent me to private school for middle and high school. I was able to see first hand, the difference between a fully funded education and an underfunded education, and it was astounding. But seeing that difference is what motivated me, once I had children of my own, to fight for fully funded public schools, because I believe every student deserves access to a quality education. Not just those who can afford to pay tuition. So, imagine my dismay when year after year it feels our elected officials are throwing their hands with no plan for how to fix this mess. "Everyone needs a piece of the pie", they tell us, "if we grow the education piece of the pie, we have to shrink the next piece. There's just not enough for all." So the logical answer to that is to grow the pie.

We are facing huge budget cuts on the federal level, and we have no idea how long this will last. Decoupling Oregon's Tax Rate from the Federal Tax Rate is a way to tell the working people of this state that we care. It's a way to take back some of the control that seems to quickly be taken away far too easily these days. The policy known as "rolling reconnect" only serves to concentrate wealth, leaving most Oregonians behind. Some are asking to keep the cuts and just cut back on spending - how does that serve Oregon? That puts money in the pockets of the few, at the expense of the masses. That's not who we are. Is it?

We have the ability to grow the pie, right at our fingertips. Our state's education, healthcare, food benefits and SO MUCH more depend on it. Please make the break.

Thank you for your time.

Maya Pueo von Geldern