

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Reschke and Walters, and members of the House Revenue Committee,

I am an Oregon voter and a public school counselor in our poorest, most impacted part of East Portland – the Rockwood neighborhood in what we affectionately call “the numbers.” PLEASE ADVANCE HB 4125 to modernize the Kicker. I will be meticulously tracking who supports advancing HB 4125 so I can advocate to all of my unions, social media, and personal connections about supporting them for reelection or working hard to get detractors voted out.

In my role as a counselor, I support student mental health, but I also serve as a social worker for families. This is my 12th year being a public school servant, and it is more austere now than I’ve ever seen it.

I deliver food boxes each week to families whose EBT has been slashed because they are not US citizens – most are documented, refugee families with multiple children. Sometimes I can finagle things to get EBT for any of their children who are citizens, but this is a MASSIVE blow to resources.

I was just talking to a fifth-grade girl whose mom and sister escaped her abusive father – they moved into a shelter, and there are no affordable housing programs accepting clients who can help them get permanent housing. Mom is doing absolutely everything to get back on her feet – a model social services client; motivated to apply for jobs, assistance programs, grants, and housing. She feels that she’s shouting into a void. Mom’s EBT was reduced, and this girl is so stressed about money that she confided in me that she’s thinking about selling inappropriate images to men online. OF COURSE, I took all the proper measures to keep this child safe, but I share this with you to alert you to HOW DESPERATE FAMILIES ARE and how it’s trickling down and traumatizing their children.

Our kids are traumatized due to systemic racism, poverty, community violence, and the kind of interpersonal fight-or-flight dynamics that persist in families who are in survival mode. Because of our school district’s massive budget cuts (in spite of their best attempts to work with the union and pinch pennies), we laid off 12 staff last year, including my team of a full time social worker and full time co-counselor. Now it’s just me full time at the school, where needs are higher than ever. Our superintendent just shared that again, because of federal cuts, inflation, and deficit, we will likely have to CUT MORE. MAYBE THEY’LL EVEN CUT ME!

WE MUST FIGURE OUT A REVENUE STREAM TO SUPPORT SOCIAL SERVICES AND SCHOOLS IN OREGON.
HAVE THE COURAGE to reform the kicker.

HB 4125 is the only plan I have seen that can bring in revenue for schools in a timely fashion and actually has legs. Our state cannot seem to pass a corporate tax and individual school bonds don’t address sustainable funding, and take years to plan and execute and bring to voters. reforming the kicker is the most hope I’ve had for bringing revenue into the oregon budget for critical social services that have been gutted.

DO SOMETHING. PLEASE. THE SUFFERING IS SO IMMENSE. We have a viable option to move the needle even marginally in the right direction!

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marissa", written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marissa Yang Bertucci, M.Ed, PC-A