



Date: March 27, 2025

Name: OEA Vice President Enrique Ferrera

Committee: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

Bill: SB 5516

Position: Support

Chairs Ruiz and Sollman, members of the committee. For the record, my name is Enrique Ferrera, and I am the vice president of the Oregon Education Association.

I want to start today by thanking the Governor, and the staff at the Department of Administrative Services and Legislative Fiscal Office for the conversation they had with education advocates this past year about current service level for the state school fund. That early work means that today's conversation – for the first time in over a decade – isn't about what the correct formula for current service level is, but rather what current service level means.

After over 30-years of underinvestment, \$11.4 billion in the SSF means that state-wide we will tread water, but treading water should not be good enough. And for many districts, \$11.4 billion means significant cuts.

For example: In West Linn-Wilsonville, \$11.4 billion will result in cuts of over 60 positions. Positions such as literacy coaches and SpEd teacher assistants that are desperately needed to support the student body in the community.

In districts that aren't seeing cuts, increases in the SpEd student population, or student poverty, or students with other social, emotional and economic pressures on them and their families, means that needs continue to grow while districts' ability to meet those needs decrease.

I'd like to point you to Bonita Randklev's testimony in the written record. Bonita is from Lebanon, a district that won't see cuts, but they don't have transitional kindergarten program to support their youngest learners, who enter school not yet potty trained. They don't have social-emotional learning classrooms in every elementary school. They don't have more mental health support in their secondary school as students encounter issues of addiction, depression, suicide, and houselessness.



What they DO have is a SpEd population of 18%. So, now that we have the opportunity, let's spend today talking about investments: This session, I hope we focus on the fact that Oregon has underfunded SpEd education by over \$700 million in the last biennium, and we take critical steps like lifting the SpEd weight cap to make progress as we continue to strive to meet the Quality Education Model.

Treading water is a decision that the legislature can make. But for the sake of our students and their future, I would urge you all to invest every dollar you can into our schools, and give our educators the support they need to support our state's wonderful students.