

February 20, 2024

House Revenue Committee
Rep. Nancy Nathanson, Chair

Chair Nathanson and members of the committee:

As you know, the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) represents more than 24,000 workers who support all levels of public education in Oregon's 36 counties, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, education service districts (ESDs), parks, and community colleges. Classified employees are a key group of frontline caregivers who support Oregon's students every day, including some of the most economically and medically fragile.

OSEA has long opposed the unfair cap on what proportion of a district's students may be counted for additional State School Fund (SSF) weights. Capping that amount harms not only the students who are legally required to receive additional support, but also their peers, whose educational experience is diluted because insufficient resources are flowing to their school district. This is the critical point to understand: Because all students must be provided a free and appropriate public education, artificially capping the funding associated with students who need additional support simply means that all students in the district face a diluted educational experience as more must be done with less. While classified staff are masters of doing more with less, because they have had to do so for decades, this isn't the kind of education that Oregonians expect for their kids.

Additionally, as the staff who work directly with higher need students, it's alarming to our members that additional SSF weights are only capped for special education students. We do not believe that equity is well served by the arbitrary cap, currently set at 11 percent. The policy inherently prevents some school districts from using best practices to support students with special needs by constricting the resources they receive. Additionally, it's worth noting that the legal responsibility a district takes on when a student is identified as having a special need is often far greater than the amount of funding they gain from one additional SSF weight.

OSEA also shares the desire to support services for students experiencing homelessness by adding an increased SSF weight. Because classified staff work most directly with students, we see it clearly when resources are not available to help the kids who need it most.

The member-leaders of OSEA have been heartened to see legislative investments in the SSF in 2023. We are excited to help legislative leaders and Gov. Kotek plan more comprehensively for appropriately funding Oregon's schools. Changes to the SSF distribution formula are needed, but they are one part of a complex and decentralized public education system in Oregon. As the governor convenes a process to improve that system, emphasizing the priorities of funding, accountability, and transparency, OSEA is proud and committed to elevating the voices of the educators we represent and the students they support. OSEA remains dedicated to providing the





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best quality public education possible and we're eager to help deliver that for our students.

Sincerely,

Bob Estabrook
OSEA Government Relations Specialist

*The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) is an affiliate of
the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the AFL-CIO.*

