Dear Governor Kitzhaber, Oregon Education Investment Board, and future Chief Education Officer,

I am a parent of a 7th grader and a 4th grader in Portland Public Schools. I am writing to implore you to change increase education funding in the state of Oregon.

Over the last seven years, I have witnessed continuous degradation in resources for our students. I have seen an emphasis on "teaching to the test" increase and a decrease in actual hands on learning in the classroom. My children have entered a system of funding decreases – over their short time in the Oregon school system they have seen cuts in music, physical education, school nurse, library arts, art, languages, counseling, and an increase in classroom size. It is sad that they are no longer surprised that every fall brings fewer opportunities for them - in their lives, program cuts are the norm.

My family is fortunate to live close to fabulous schools, where parents have stepped in to shore up our failing system – our elementary school is able to provide some of these functions only by the will of the parents. Unfortunately, this resource is tapped out with parent led PE, Art, and Music. We are not qualified to step in to some of the vacated roles, such as school nurse, counselor, or teaching a class in order to lower classroom sizes. Many of our neighboring schools are not as fortunate to have a group of parents who are able to take time off of work to commit to offering these volunteer led programs. This is leading to huge inequities in education offerings in schools that are mere miles apart in the same district!

I have also seen the effects these draconian cuts have had on innovative programs within our schools. I know of programs that are making huge strides in increasing outcomes for students that have learning disabilities, are talented and gifted, or have simply fallen behind. These programs are falling by the wayside due to the lack of funding. Innovation, creativity, and progress is stunted when principals have to cut down to the bone in order to streamline functions to serve the most children with few resources

A strong, well-funded education system does more than just help our children - it strengthens our community and our workforce. We need a strong education system in order to attract jobs to our state and to keep tax-payers and corporations from leaving. We need to ensure that our children have the knowledge they need to compete successfully with students from other states, to enter the workforce, and become taxpayers.

So I ask of you – what will each of you do to actively champion the future of Oregon? Achievement compacts will have a minimal impact upon our struggling system and appear to be an attempt to appease Oregonians. Please engage in real leadership and increase funding to our schools.

Thank you,

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