As a member of Oregon PTA, the oldest child advocacy organization in Oregon and the nation, I am writing to express my views on the state of education. Since 2003, K-12 in Oregon has declined as a share of the state budget from 44.8% to 39.1% today. This has occurred at a time when districts are facing new/tougher standards, achievement compacts and many districts are seeing increased enrollment. Oregon currently is 7% below the national average in per student expenditures. According to the US census we slipped below the national average in expenditures in 2001 and have not recovered.

Quality Education Model

Oregonians have a blue print of what a world class education system requires, namely the Quality Education Model*. QEM is widely accepted as an effective prototype for educating our children, and yet the legislature has repeatedly failed to fund our K-12 schools at a level required by QEM. We appreciate the leadership shown by the Governor to improve outcomes for students. However, our school districts cannot continue to face millions of dollars of budget shortfalls year after year, forcing the loss of quality personnel, shortening the school year, increased class size and degradation of facilities and also be expected to turn out students prepared for college or careers in the 21st century. As measured by the QEM Oregon is almost $3 billion short of meeting the quality needs of our students.

State Wide Leadership to adequately fund schools

As members of Oregon PTA, we support our legislators in a serious effort to create plan for adequate funding source for K-12 schools, while still requiring results and accountability from our districts. In order to improve outcomes in education, Oregon must invest adequate money in education and to do that, the state must revamp its state revenue system. We request the legislature and the Governor demonstrate leadership to have the important conversations about revenue reform and wise use of our limited resources at the state and local levels. Oregon's education system requires political courage to face the needs of our schools, students, and the realities of today's job market. Our children deserve quality schools and overdue leadership to adequately fund their schools. For too long we have waited for state wide leadership on funding schools. If you lead, Oregon PTA volunteers will support you.

Thank you from a concerned parent,
Bernadette Pearson