May 23, 2012

Dear OEIB:

As a member of Oregon PTA and a parent of students attending Oregon City Schools, I am writing to express my views on the state of education.

In Oregon City, our schools had to cut 10 student-contact days this year, and 5 days last year and in 2008-2009. Who knows how many they will have to cut next year to balance the budget. In addition, we have been forced to close three elementary schools and reconfigure elementary and middle schools. Class sizes are already bigger than they should be, we have lost our elementary PE teachers, severely cut back music, athletics, counseling, and many other programs, and have lost many teachers and staff. Our kids have had enough change and cuts to their education. They deserve stable, adequate funding and a full school year.

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.

Sincerely,

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