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Legislative Education Budget to Make Urgent Investments in Summer Learning and Keeping Students in the Classroom

SALEM – Responding to the challenges facing the state’s public education system, legislative leaders announced the framework of a funding package to make targeted investments that provide summer learning opportunities for students across the state, support teachers facing severe burnout, and protect school districts impacted by wildfires.

“Schools need to be safe and open for students and the adults working with them for in-person learning five days a week because it’s what’s best for ALL kids and families,” said Senator Lew Frederick (D-Portland), co-chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education. “Times are hard for educators, kids and families right now – by making significant investments right now, we can move the needle and ensure that every child in Oregon is receiving a meaningful, quality educational experience.”

“This budget will support our students and teachers who have been through so much these last two years with increased stress from the pandemic,” said Rep. Susan McLain (D-Hillsboro), co-chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education. “We are focused on ensuring our students can continue meeting in-person and that we are recruiting and retaining teachers so they have more time to give our kids the education they deserve.”

Summer Learning: Today, Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem) and Senator Michael Dembrow (D-Portland) announced a \$150 million investment to keep Oregon kids learning and active over the summer months.

“We have to be aggressive about education,” said President Courtney. “Our children have really been affected by this pandemic. We pushed hard for summer learning last year. Parents and teachers told us it had a big effect on kids. Summer learning has to become permanent.

“This is a big step forward for our students... but we can’t stop here. The year-round school has got to come.”

The 2022 Summer Learning Package, included in the broader education funding package, will create grants for school districts and community organizations to provide summer learning programs and activities.

These grants will be directed through three specific investments:

- Summer K-8 Enrichment Grants, funding enrichment activities, academic learning, and mental health support for kids.
- Summer High School Academic Grants, supporting summer school programs that help high school students stay on track for graduation.
- Summer Community Activity Grants, helping our community partners provide new or existing summer activities such as day camps, park programs, and tutoring.

Additional programs may be included as details are finalized. More information about this package will be available during the final week of the 2022 legislative session.

Addressing Oregon’s Education Workforce Shortage: Oregon’s educators work tirelessly to provide our students with the best possible education. Unfortunately, schools are experiencing a severe shortage of staff, driven in part by the pandemic.

To address this shortage, the funding package includes a significant investment in Oregon’s education workforce to increase the number of Oregon teachers, substitutes, and other school staff. This new funding will set up a new recruitment and retention grant program to support the hiring of new school staff and address burnout. Another grant program will be established to reimburse substitute teachers and instructional assistants for the cost of their training.

“The stresses of the pandemic have shown us that we need to take action right away to reduce teacher burnout and eliminate the shortages of teachers and substitute teachers,” said Senator Michael Dembrow (D-Portland), chair of the Senate Committee on Education. “We need to give teachers more time to teach, attract and retain more good teachers and staff, eliminate bureaucratic hurdles, and hire more substitute teachers by finding trained Oregonians and retired educators looking for part-time work.”

“This is a first step to address a long-standing need,” said Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon (D-Woodburn), chair of the House Committee on Education. “The bill will provide important infrastructure and funding that will make a difference for this and next school year, but we are committed to finding more long-term solutions in future sessions so that our students and teachers can continue to be successful.”

“Students learn best when they are learning in healthy, safe classrooms five days a week,” said Rep. Courtney Neron (D-Washington County/Wilsonville), vice-chair of the House Committee on Education. “The plan we’ve put forward will help ensure that we are supporting our teachers who work so hard to help kids thrive.”

Supporting Wildfire-Impacted School Districts: The devastating 2020 wildfire season burned over a million acres and destroyed thousands of Oregon homes and businesses. Many of the families who were displaced by these fires have been unable to return to their communities. As a result, several of the school districts in these wildfire-impacted communities experienced a sharp drop in enrollment, which resulted in a considerable decrease in their overall funding.

The education funding package sends additional resources to these school districts to ensure their funding remains stable over the next several years. This support will allow them to continue operating and providing essential services for displaced families as communities rebuild.

“Keeping kids safe and learning is one of our very most important jobs,” said Sen. Jeff Golden (D-Ashland). “That means ensuring that school districts fully recover from the fiscal and emotional devastation of wildfires. This budget meets that challenge. We’re here for kids and their schools when they need us, now and going forward.”

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