



PRESS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Scott Moore (503) 986-1904
scott.moore@state.or.us

Oregon House Passes Earliest K-12 Budget in at Least a Quarter Century *Education funding bill sets a stable budget floor; will automatically add more funds when available*

Today, the Oregon House of Representatives voted 35-25 to pass the earliest K-12 budget since at least 1991, giving school districts across the state the certainty they need to begin planning for the next two years.

The K-12 budget, at \$7.255 billion, provides a stable funding floor for Oregon's 197 school districts, adding \$600 million to the \$1 billion the legislature added in the last budget. The budget funds full-day kindergarten for every child in the state, boosts support for High-Needs students and English Language Learners, and ensures that every low-income student can eat lunch.

The bill also includes a provision that will automatically add more funds to classrooms if additional revenue becomes available in the next forecast.

The bill, House Bill 5017, provides for \$12.5 million to improve ELL programs in struggling schools, so that these students can gain fluency and move out of the programs more efficiently. A companion bill will require uniform spending, transparency, and the use of best practices in all ELL programs.

"Currently, only 49% of English Language Learner students graduate our high schools and I know we can do better," says **Rep. Joe Gallegos (D-Hillsboro)**. "With the investment included in this budget to support ELL programs, we have the ability to turn a crisis into a real opportunity for students throughout our state."

HB 5017 also eliminates the "reduced-price" lunch category for low-income students, which required these struggling students and their families to come up with the remainder of the costs for their lunch. This was a barrier for many families, and put district administrators in the position of being a collections agency. The K-12 budget provides \$2.39 million to cover the costs of those lunches, bringing in \$5.1 million in federal funds and ensuring that every kid has the opportunity to learn on a full stomach.

"We had heart breaking testimony on the need for this change in the House Education Committee," said **Rep. Margaret Doherty (D-Tigard)**. "Students came in with lint covered pennies trying to buy lunch. The bottom line is that when our students are hungry they can not pursue their dreams."

The budget also, for the first time, fully funds all-day kindergarten across the state. Full-day kindergarten was passed by the legislature in 2011, to be implemented in 2015. It gives students a head start for their educational future, but also provides an economic boost for working families.

The Co-Chairs of the Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Peter Buckley and Sen. Richard Devlin, prioritized schools by adding funds to K-12 even while leaving a \$140 million budget shortfall in critical human service and public safety programs.

Despite this prioritization and the promise to add more money if the economy improves, and despite the key investments for high-needs students, and despite the fact that passing this budget early provides a stable funding floor for districts, House Republicans voted against the bill.

Republicans argued for more funding, but provided zero solutions on where to find that money, which would have to come out of programs for vulnerable community members and public safety.

“Let’s be clear—we all want to do more to invest in our schools. I will fight until the day we *sine die* to get every cent possible into our classrooms,” said **Majority Leader Val Hoyle (D-West Eugene & Junction City)**. “But let’s also be clear that adding more funds to K-12 schools without new revenue will require more cuts to critical programs like mental health care, public safety, and services for low-income seniors.”

“I’m heartened to hear bipartisan support for increasing funds to K-12 schools,” Hoyle added. “I’m calling on our colleagues across the aisle to stay true to their word and join us in a conversation about how we find the revenue we need in order to make a truly game-changing investment in our schools.”

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