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Contact: Greg Stiles, 503.986.1009

Greg.Stiles@oregonlegislature.gov

Secretary of State audit shows PPS fails to monitor spending and address equity issues *Public Schools needs to demonstrate accountability before asking for more taxpayer funds*

Salem, Ore. – Oregon’s largest school district is failing its children, especially students of color. An audit released today by the office of the Secretary of State makes clear Portland Public Schools (PPS) is woefully underperforming despite being the top-funded district in the state.

Salem Democrats are pushing for \$2 Billion in additional taxes to fund education. Yet, how can Oregonians afford to spend more tax dollars when the state’s largest school district is systemically fraught with inefficiencies and has no mechanisms in place to improve performance?

“Hardworking Oregonians are being called upon to fund a \$2 billion increase at a time when any increase will be consumed by PERS payments,” House Republican Leader Carl Wilson (R-Grants Pass) said. “On top of that, this news follows a previous Secretary of State audits showing overspending failures in state agency procurement.”

The audit establishes that PPS is lax in monitoring its spending. There are no benchmarks in place to provide a starting place to begin a coherent improvement strategy. Oregonians should not be asked to spend more money for a school district that has been lax in tracking its finances and unable to retain teachers.

Worse yet, minority classroom underperformance is not being adequately addressed. The achievement gap between white and African-American students in PPS is a staggering 53 percent versus a 29 percent statewide average. There is also a notable lack of equity between poor and wealthy schools.

The audit reveals PPS spent \$13,000 on a retirement party, including renting a boat, ordering flowers from Hawaii, and providing crystal gifts.

The audit also shows the Department of Education has done a poor job of monitoring inefficient spending by school districts, produced too many short-lived initiatives without long-term funding plans, and needs to better manage the performance of grant funds.

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