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PRESS RELEASE

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Oregon House provides much-needed relief to school districts

House Bill 2927 will make a dedicated investment in our schools and high-need students

SALEM – School districts across Oregon will receive increased support for High-Needs students under a bill that passed the House 52-5 today.

Rep. Susan McLain (D-Forest Grove) carried House Bill 2927 on the House floor. The bill will increase the funding for the High Cost Disability Account from \$18 million to \$35 million, an amount already accounted for in the K-12 schools budget that passed Tuesday.

The High Cost Disabilities Account was established in 2003, and is a grant program designed to reimburse school districts for the costs of educating students whose eligible service costs are above \$30,000. The Legislature sends funds to the High Cost Disability Account every two years. The Account has been held steady at \$18 million per year since the 2007-2008 school year, even while the need has skyrocketed much higher than the allotment. Over \$42.5 million in needed funds were claimed in the 2013-2014 school year.

“Increasing the amount for high cost disabilities helps put more money back into the classroom in school districts that have higher portions of these very fragile high-needs students,” said Representative McLain. “This bill will free up general education dollars that are currently being spent on unreimbursed high cost services.”

“The High Cost Disabilities Grant has been a successful program and a lifeline for districts with high-needs students,” Rep. McLain added. “We owe it to these districts and these students to make sure their needs are met while protecting funding for our classrooms.”

At current funding levels, districts are reimbursed at roughly 40 percent of their costs – which has resulted in millions of unreimbursed costs to schools.

“All of our schools want to provide full services to the high need and special service students in their district, not only because it’s federally required, but also because it’s the right thing to do,” Rep. McLain added. “This program benefits all students, it benefits all districts.”

House Bill 2927 now moves to the Senate for consideration.

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