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PRESS RELEASE

Oregon Legislature 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 is headed to Governor Brown’s desk this week.

Rep. Susan McLain (D-Forest Grove) introduced House Bill 2927 in February, based on a recommendation from the 2014 School Funding Task Force. Under the bill, funding for the High Cost Disability Account will increase from \$18 million to \$35 million. Established in 2003, the Account funds a grant program designed to reimburse school districts for the costs of educating students whose eligible service costs are above \$30,000.

“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,” Representative McLain said in her testimony to the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee on June 9th. “We know that when school districts have high amounts of unreimbursed costs, a significant amount of money is diverted from the general fund to absorb those costs, to the detriment of other students.”

The Legislature has not increased the funding for the Account since the 2007-2008 school year, whereas need has climbed to more than double the funding level. Nearly half of all 197 Oregon school districts have at least one student eligible for the High Cost Disability Account grant. Over \$42.5 million in eligible costs were claimed in the 2013-2014 school year alone, lowering the reimbursement rate to roughly 40 percent. As a result, districts are absorbing millions in unreimbursed costs that instead come out of their general fund, per-pupil dollars.

“House Bill 2927 guarantees funding for a successful program which has provided significant relief for all school districts with our open enrollment policy,” Representative McLain added. “We owe it to these districts and these students to make sure their needs are met while protecting funding for our classrooms. This program benefits all students and all districts.”

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