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Senate Democrats vote to support education funding increase

SB 5517 authorizes historic \$8.2 billion to state school fund for K-12 education

SALEM – Senate Democrats on the Joint Ways and Means Committee voted today to approve an 11-percent budget increase, compared to the last biennium, for K-12 schools statewide.

The Joint Ways and Means Committee voted to send an \$8.2 billion school funding package to the Senate with a “do pass” recommendation. More can be added later if additional revenues are secured. Sen. Rod Monroe (D-Portland) chairs the Joint Committee on Ways and Means SubCommittee on Education, which sent this budget proposal to the full committee. Sen. Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay) also represents the Senate Democrats on that subcommittee.

“This budget represents an 11-percent increase over the past biennium for K-12 schools, which is a top priority of this Legislature,” Monroe said. “This is the largest K-12 education budget we have ever had, and it exceeds the amount of money that it costs for school districts to continue operating at the current service levels. I am glad that we are passing this to the floor now, because it gives local school districts some certainty. If we can get more revenue this session, we may be able to raise that number for K-12 education, but school districts statewide will know that they will have at least \$8.2 billion to work with.”

The budget builds on last biennium’s historically high education budget by adding an additional \$827 million in resources. Of the total budget, \$7.7 billion will come from the General Fund with another \$452 million of lottery money and \$67 million of other funds.

Allocations from the fund will go to school districts and education service districts statewide, based on a formula. Half of the money will be distributed for the 2017-18 school year and the rest for the 2018-19 school year. Other funding for local schools comes from local property tax

levies and other sources. Combined with local funding from property taxes and other sources to local districts statewide, an estimated \$12.2 billion will be invested in K-12 education in Oregon. K-12 education, public safety and health and human services make up about 90 percent of the state's General Fund budget, funded primarily through state income taxes and lottery revenue.

"This is a good budget for Oregon's schools, and we should be happy about this, but we have an opportunity to make it even better," Monroe said. "As a former teacher for many years and as a former school board member, I understand and appreciate the importance of properly funding education. Though this budget is solid, I don't think we should stop looking for opportunities to do even better. We'd love to have more resources to put into education for Oregon's children, and we need a revenue package to do that. We can't keep shortchanging our children with an inadequate revenue structure for our schools."

Senate Bill 5517 will go to the Oregon Senate for a vote later this week.

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