



January 28, 2026

**Douglas Education Service District
2026 Legislative Session – Budget Advocacy Letter**

Dear Senator Smith, Representative Boice, Representative Osborne, Representative Skarlatos, and Representative Wright:

We write on behalf of Douglas Education Service District (ESD) and the 13 component school districts and students we serve in Douglas County to urge you to prevent any reductions to K-12 education funding during the 2026 Legislative Session.

At a time when student needs are increasing, reducing education funding would move Oregon in the wrong direction. Our schools and communities have worked to recover from the impacts of COVID, and the passage of HR 1 has created new fiscal pressures that threaten critical supports for students and families. Cutting education funding now would not address these challenges; it would compound them.

Students Are Still Recovering, and Needs Are Increasing

We continue to see the long-term effects of the pandemic across the districts we serve. Students are arriving at school with heightened academic, social, emotional, and health needs. These needs directly affect learning, so schools have become a primary point of stability for students and families. Educators and support staff are already operating at capacity, often serving as the link between families and essential services.

At the same time, federal reductions to Medicaid and SNAP are increasing pressure on schools to fill gaps never meant for the education system alone. When families lose access to health care and nutrition supports, those unmet needs show up in classrooms, attendance, and student well-being. Schools are stepping in because they must, but this work requires staff, time, and funding.

As federal support is reduced, the demand on schools increases. Reducing state education funding in this context would directly undermine student stability.

Preventing Cuts Is Essential to Student Stability

Budget reductions would have immediate and tangible consequences. Education funding is not discretionary spending; it is an investment in people. Most of our funding supports educators, specialists, and service providers who deliver services that districts cannot provide on their own.

If funding is reduced, the impact is not theoretical. Cuts would force difficult choices, including reduced services, fewer staff, and diminished capacity to support students with the greatest needs.

We know from experience that cuts to education are not easily reversed. Once staff are laid off and programs are eliminated, rebuilding takes years, while students experience the consequences immediately. Preventing cuts now avoids long-term damage that costs more to repair later.

The Education Stability Fund Exists for This Moment

Oregon voters created the Education Stability Fund to protect schools during periods of economic disruption and uncertainty. This moment aligns with that purpose.

The Education Stability Fund is designed to be used responsibly, with a permanent funding source to replenish it over time. Using the Fund now allows the state to prevent immediate harm to students while preserving the ability to plan for future budget challenges.

The Fund has been accessed before, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, to stabilize education funding and protect students from the most damaging impacts of budget shortfalls. That precedent demonstrates both the intent and the effectiveness of this tool.

Our Ask

We recognize the complexity of the budget decisions before you and the pressure to balance competing priorities. However, before any reductions are made to classrooms, school staffing, or essential student services, we urge you to use the Education Stability Fund to prevent cuts to K-12 education.

For Douglas ESD and the districts, preventing cuts means preserving the capacity to meet students where they are today, not where we wish they were. Stable education funding provides stability for students, families, and communities.

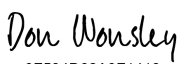
When state funding falls short, districts are forced to make difficult choices that directly affect students. Reduced budgets can lead to larger class sizes, fewer instructional assistants, cuts to intervention programs, and the loss of electives or enrichment opportunities that keep students engaged in school. For small and rural systems, these reductions strain already-thin staffing and limit the supports students rely on every day. Without stable funding, the capacity to provide safe learning environments, transportation, mental-health supports, and consistent instructional time is put at risk.

In short, students are still recovering, needs are rising, and the tools to prevent harm already exist. We urge you to use those tools to protect Oregon's students.

We appreciate your leadership and your commitment to public education. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that Oregon's education system remains strong, stable, and focused on student success.

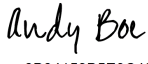
Sincerely,

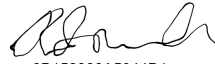
Douglas County Public Schools Superintendents and Douglas ESD Superintendent


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 Don Wonsley
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 Joe LaFountaine
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 Andy Boe
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 Bridget McMillen
 Glendale SD #77

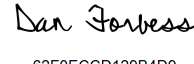
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 Jody Cyr
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 Jared Cordon
 Roseburg SD #4

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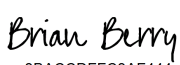
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 Erika Bare
 South Umpqua SD #19

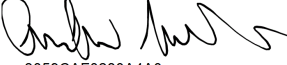
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 Terry Prestianni
 Sutherlin SD #30

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 Kevin Wilson
 Winston-Dillard SD #116

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 Brian Berry
 Yoncalla SD #32

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 Analicia Nicholson
 Douglas ESD