



COASA Legislative Priorities - Special Education Funding in the SSF

- **Special Education Cap** - The 11% cap was put in place in 1991 – over 30 years ago – after the passage of Measure 5 and has not been changed since. Additive funding is needed to ensure school districts have the financial resources to serve students with disabilities. The statewide average is about 15% and some of our districts are approaching 18+%. (Estimated cost to raise the cap to 15% and keep the cap waiver above 15% is \$400 million for the 2025-27 biennium)
- **High-Cost Disability Account** – Current funding for students with the most significant special education needs only reimburses about 40% of costs, or just 40 cents for every dollar of eligible school district expenditures. We need to reimburse 100% of the costs to pay for critical services to students. (Estimated cost is growing and may exceed \$200 million for the 2025-27 biennium)

K-12 Funding - Current Service Level Messaging for the SSF

- Funding is one of our top challenges and legislative priorities in 2025. We are grateful for the investments the Legislature made in 2023 that allowed us to focus on improving academic outcomes and meeting the growing social and emotional needs of students.
- We support the significant improvements that Governor Kotek has made to how K-12 Current Service Level (CSL) is calculated. This is a much more realistic accounting of our budget roll up costs and inflationary pressures.
- We urge you to support the \$11.36 billion State School Fund request in the Governor's budget as the starting point for the SSF funding discussion.
- We have to be able to maintain the staff and programs necessary to meet the growing academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs of all students. And that takes financial resources.
- Even with this critical funding, school districts are struggling financially to meet the growing needs of our students and keep up with increasing costs. And for many, this funding level will still mean budget reductions.
 - Share an example or two of the cost pressures the district is facing.
 - Examples could include: PERS costs, unfunded mandates like unemployment insurance for classified employees, or the increasing costs of staff and benefits.
- 2025 is a unique opportunity to ensure that school districts and ESDs are receiving the funding to support our students with disabilities through critical staffing, services, and programs.

K-12 Funding Priority - Addressing the Special Education Funding Shortfall in the SSF

- **We Have a Moral and Legal Obligation to Serve Students With Disabilities.** Our students with disabilities deserve every opportunity to succeed in school.
- **But Our Funding Model for Special Education is Inequitable and Needs Updating.** The 11% SPED cap was put in place after the passage of Measure 5 in 1991.
- **Funding Has Not Kept Up With Caseload Growths.** We have more students with disabilities who need highly specialized services and well-trained staff. We must have the funding to meet these growing needs.
- **Current Special Education Funding Is Inadequate.** Funding for the staff, services, and programs that serve our students with disabilities does not account for the real costs our school districts incur. Districts must cover these costs by redirecting general fund dollars to cover inadequate state funding.



Describe How the Current Special Education Funding Models in the SSF Impact Your District

We need to make additional investments to meet the growing needs of our students with disabilities in the State School Fund. Share a district example:

- **Share a story about the growth of students with special education needs in your district:** *In my six years working in the Southtown School District, we have seen a 15% increase in the number of students with disabilities while we have increased the number of support staff for our students with disabilities by more than a third. But our funding has not kept up with the growing needs of our students.*
- **Raise the Special Education Cap:** *In the Southtown School District, more than 17% of our students have been identified with special education needs, but the state only provides double weighting for 11% of our students. This means we have to move XXX millions/hundreds of thousands of dollars from our general fund to cover these shortfalls and it impacts our ability to provide services to all of our students.*
- **Increase Funding for High Cost Disability Account:** *As a Superintendent, I have a moral and legal obligation to serve all students with disabilities. In my district, we have a growing number of students who qualify for High Cost Disability Account funding. But that Account only covers about 40% of our eligible costs and it is forcing me to move dollars from other programs to make up the funding gap. The state must fund 100% of the costs of meeting the needs of our most severely impacted students.*

Close With Your Specific Ask

- **Additive Funding is Needed.** While funding formulas need to be changed, it is not enough to improve the formulas, additive funding is needed to account for true costs. According to ODE data, school districts report spending more than \$700 million per biennium on special education services that are not funded or reimbursed by the State School Fund. We must make two critical changes:

Representative/Senator (their last name), will you please commit to:

- Raising the SPED cap to 15% and including the additive dollars to pay for these new weights in the State School Fund Appropriation? and;
- Ensuring that school districts receive reimbursement for 100% of the eligible expenditures they make to ensure our most impacted students with disabilities receive the supports and services they deserve?

For more information, contact:

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