

March 2, 2022

Portland Public School Board Members
and PPS Superintendent Guerrero
501 N. Dixon Street
Portland, OR 97227

Chair DePass, Board Members and Superintendent Guerrero,

The district's budget situation as reported and explained to us by educators, parents, and students, has caused grave concerns among a few of Oregon's lawmakers, and members of the BIPOC Caucus, who represent the PPS community in the Oregon legislature. After an unprecedented federal investment in our neighborhood public schools, and months of collaboration between lawmakers and education stakeholders to address the education workforce crisis, we are concerned to learn that PPS is considering cutting 120 teaching positions next year. At a time when districts across the state have access to historic levels of funding, and when our students have greater needs than ever before, cuts to student facing positions should be the option of absolute last resort for Oregon school districts.

We acknowledge that there have been enrollment declines in the past few years; however, changes to state school funding are not based on raw enrollment changes in a district but are instead dependent on weighted enrollment changes across the state. Moreover, district funding is determined by the highest of the past two years' weights, and funding per weight will increase this incoming year due to statewide enrollment drops.

So, while there might be some shortfall, it is hard to understand how the situation is as dire as reported. And when one examines the financial picture for PPS in totality, including: stable property taxes and PPS's operating levy; SIA funds that can be used to decrease class size and increase emotional supports for students; and over \$100 million in ESSER federal funds, it would seem that PPS may actually have a historic level of funding for district operations for the upcoming school year. Given this information, we feel very strongly that PPS should, at the very least, be able to maintain current services for students and avoid the dramatic cuts to teaching staff that the district has proposed.

We also want to express our frustration that PPS' proposed budget cuts were all aimed at direct student contact positions. At a time when our community is trying to do everything we can to mitigate the trauma caused to students by the pandemic, and build a public education system that is equipped to meet the increasingly complex needs of Oregon students, it is difficult to fathom why PPS would propose a financial plan built entirely on cutting direct student support positions from our neighborhood public schools. As members of the BIPOC Caucus, we fear that English Language Learners, students with disabilities and low-income students will be disproportionately impacted by these cuts.

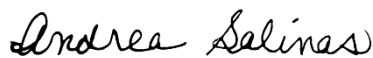
To help us better understand why you are proposing such dramatic cuts, we would like to ask several questions:

1. What is the exact budget hole you expect for next year, and how was the budget shortfall calculated?
2. How are you making the assumptions about costs and anticipated revenue for 2023-24 and beyond, that were presented to the PPS Board of Education on 2/22/22? For example, were community members who withdrew students during the COVID-19 pandemic surveyed to inform the assumption that none of those students would be returning to the district in the next academic year?
3. How are all ESSER funds being spent? Please provide a line-item list.
4. What concurrent cuts are happening to administrative positions?

To reiterate, we understand that difficult decisions often have to be made during the budgeting process for Oregon's schools, but with over \$100 million in federal money available to PPS with the express purpose of preventing cuts to student services in our schools, it concerns us that there are 120-160 student facing positions that are being removed.

Thank you for the time and help understanding this issue.

Sincerely,



Representative Andrea Salinas



Representative Travis Nelson



Representative Khanh Pham



Senator Kayse Jama



Senator Akasha Lawrence Spence