

House Education Committee
Bill SB 87 Oral Opposition Testimony
March 10, 2025
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Thank you for allowing me time to speak today.

I'd like to focus on the impact vouchers/tax breaks/scholarships will have on special education since those are my students, the students I am proud to say have a right to a free and appropriate education at public school, the students who repeatedly get what's left over because they are just too expensive.

I teach kids with communication challenges. They're expensive to educate. They require specialized devices that afford them the luxury of basic communication, specialized instruction and para support to have access to the same quality education their nondisabled peers receive. Private schools will be able to do a cost-benefit analysis and politely decline admission for many of them because educational dignity is expensive. What then?

And when the public schools are stripped of even more funding due to the budget shortfall that will inevitably plague our state after offering these discounts to families already utilizing private school, what then? I get an increased, unmanageable caseload of students because we can't afford to hire another teacher? Punished for underperforming as a result of serving as a para all day because we didn't have funding to hire support staff? Blamed for leaving if I can't handle the pressure of 80+-hour weeks and creating adapted materials from classroom objects and duct tape anymore? But most importantly - and what should be the top priority for everyone here - my "leftover" kids watch their support dwindle and wonder why they weren't worth it.

Our responsibility as a state and my privilege as a teacher is to provide the best education to these marginalized students. Our governor recently asked for special education to be funded at \$72 million and was met by state legislators with a "generous" compromise of \$10 million. SpEd funding is still required. If we don't have enough by taking from our general education students, we have to figure out how to educate with duct tape and unpaid overtime. Please, don't make that struggle worse. Stop this attack on public education, on teachers, on students with disabilities, and show every one of our kids that you truly believe in their right to be educated.