



***Parent Advocacy
to Action Guide***

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Dear Parent Advocate,

First and foremost, thank you for joining the movement to Invest in Oregon! Invest in Oregon is a movement to push lawmakers to do the right thing — finally invest in Oregon's schools and invest in our future as a state.

As you are well aware, our schools have been suffering from chronic underfunding for nearly three decades. Facing some of the most crowded classrooms in the nation, inadequate mental health resources, and cuts to tech, music, and language classes, Oregon students are seeing their resources stripped from them year after year.

It doesn't have to be this way! Our schools should not be severely underfunded while the largest corporations have some of the lowest tax rates in the nation. If we want lawmakers to invest in Oregon, we will need your help. It will take all of us — parents, teachers, school board members, small business owners, community leaders — to come together and pitch in and make the message clear: it's time for corporations to pay more in taxes to better fund our schools.

By receiving this packet, you have expressed your interest in getting involved. This guide is tailored for all levels of involvement, and the list of actions are listed from lowest time commitment to highest time commitment.

Thank you for all of your time and effort. We really couldn't do this without you. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns!

Together, we can Invest in Oregon!

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How to use this guide

This guide was created with you in mind. We have heard from a countless number of community members and leaders that they are eager to take action and advocate for public policy that impacts their families. We also hear that they need flexibility based on their other personal commitments. Your time is important, and we want to help you maximize your advocacy to create change in our schools. Our hope is that this guide will lower the barrier of entry to advocacy, because every voice, especially the voices of people most impacted by our most pressing problems, is critical to finding a solution.

This guide lists many things you can do to start impacting the policy discussion around school funding and corporate taxes. They are listed in order from lowest time commitment to highest. Some of you reading this packet will do nearly everything listed, and others will do just one or two. Both are okay! Either way, we couldn't do this without your help. If you've never been involved in an effort like this, start at Step 1 and take it step by step. Once you get started, you will want to keep going!

Each step has a section explaining what the action is, how it will help us secure more school funding, tips and tricks to be successful when doing the action, and your goal. And if you have any questions along the way, our staff are here to help.

The Guide

Step 1: *Learn about how we got into this mess in the first place*

Included with this guide, you should have been given an Invest in Oregon one-pager. That one-pager explains some of the history behind our school funding crisis, and how we got here. Additionally, you can check out our website www.investoregon.org for more information. You can also check out additional resources, like this Oregon Center for Public Policy article that gives a nice summary of how we got here: <https://www.ocpp.org/2016/06/29/rpt201606-oregon-corporate-taxes-decline-gaming/>

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

By knowing the history, you will be well-equipped to have quality conversations with folks about why securing more school funding is more important. Better conversations will lead to more people engaging with us, which will grow our support.

Tips and Tricks

If you feel like there are still holes, or if you have any clarifying questions, feel free to reach out to Kevin and Joseluis directly.

Your Goal

Memorize three facts that you learn from the Invest in Oregon website and one-pager to say to friends, family and colleagues when you talk to them about these issues.

Push Yourself

Share the website and one-pager with 10 of your friends and ask them to review so they too can have good, quality conversations about the need to invest in education.

Step 2: *Write a Letter to Your Legislators*

Whether this is your first campaign, or your 100th, it is always a good idea to refresh yourself on how to advocate for policy change, and Step 2, writing a letter or postcard to your legislators, is the best way to start. It's easy and fun.

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

Your legislators need constant reminders of what their constituents need. In Salem, it can be hard at times to cut through all the noise to keep constituents at the forefront. By writing a postcard, telling your legislators that you want schools to have better funding, you will help them remember what their constituents need.

Legislators absolutely read all mail sent to them. Some of them even tally how many postcards they receive by subject. This is a low impact, high yield action that is a great first step to dip your toes into legislative activism. Letters often feel more personal to legislators, but really well-written personal emails work just as well. That comes next!

Tips and Tricks

Legislators respond best to people who are genuine and bring their own authentic voice. While we include a template in this guide for you to use, we encourage you to not use it word for word. It is strongly advised that you add your own personal story of how underfunding has impacted you, your family, and/or your community. By doing so, you will stand out from the rest of the mail that your legislators receive.

Each Oregonian has one State Representative and one State Senator. To find out who those are, please go to this website and enter in your address:

<https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/findyourlegislator/leg-districts.html>

Once you have found your legislators, you can find the address to their office by clicking on their names.

Here is a template that you can use to spark ideas:

Dear Representative/Senator _____,

[Say who you are, how many kids you have, and what your biggest concern is about a lack of school funding]

[Use a personal story. Did your child tell you something after school one day that illustrates the issue? Have you volunteered in the classroom and see a student not get the supports they need? etc.].

[Ask your lawmaker to take action, for example: "Please raise corporate taxes so we can finally invest in schools and the next generation of students doesn't face the same barriers as my child has."]

Thank you,

(Your name)

(Your address) ← this is really important so they can write you back and so that they know you are really a constituent.

Your Goal

To send a postcard to both your State Representative and State Senator.

Push Yourself

Send a postcard to your legislator every time there is a major development for school funding. Or, send a postcard every time something happens at your school that could have been prevented with adequate funding.

Step 3: *Email and Call your legislator!*

This is a natural progression from Step 2. You've already looked up your legislators contact information, you already have a script of what to say because you wrote it on your postcard. Now you just need to draft it into email and phone script! We even have a tool that makes it super easy to draft and send an email. Copy and paste this link into your browser to get started: <https://act.myngp.com/Forms/-5937648455645918208>

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

Just like the postcard writing, calls and emails are a great way to make your voice heard and remind your legislators what their constituents think about school funding. Legislators really do track how many calls and emails their offices receive on a given issue. There is never a bad time to call your legislator, but practice now so that when it comes time to push a specific bill number or proposal, you've already practiced it!

Tips and Tricks

You can use the same template as above when crafting your email. For the phone call, it's important to know that you will more than likely talk to a staff member. That's ok! Staff forward on messages to your legislators. If you get their voicemail, **leave a message!** Calling and hanging up when you get the answering machine will mean that your legislators won't know you called.

Your Goal

To make a call and send an email to both your State Representative and your State Senator.

Push Yourself

Throughout the campaign, Invest in Oregon will ask you to call and email your legislator every time something big is coming, such as a hearing. Call and email your legislator every time you are asked to via a phone call, an email, or a notification from Invest in Oregon, Our Oregon, or Families for Oregon Schools on Facebook.

Step 4: *Become an online activist*

Being an online activist is an easy way to stay up to date on the campaign, and make sure your voice is heard all from the comfort of your home! You can share your story online, and push yourself by messaging people to get involved.

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

More and more people are exclusively online, so we need to meet folks where they're at! The more people who we engage, the more momentum we will build to win more school funding!

Tips and Tricks

Post your personal story to the group. Message folks that post comments you agree with and engage with them. Share content that is emailed to you from the Invest in Oregon campaign.

Your Goal

Join the [Families for Oregon Schools](#) Facebook group and “like” the pages for [Parents and Teachers Together](#) and [A Better Oregon](#).

When you join Families for Oregon Schools, and share your personal story to the groups page and invite others to do the same.

Share a post from one of those groups to your personal page at least once a week.

Push Yourself

Message new folks who join the page and welcome them. Share a post from one of those groups to your personal page twice a week.

Step 5: Attend an Invest in Oregon Conference Call

All right, you've written to your legislators via postcard AND you've emailed and called them. You are a bonafide activist! But why stop there? Invest in Oregon has weekly conference calls to make sure that all of our advocates are on the same page throughout the campaign. To join one of the conference calls, reach out to Kevin or Joseluis so that we can send you the calendar invite!

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

Conference calls are an essential tool to make sure that folks stay updated on the happenings of Salem, the campaign, and to bounce ideas and concerns off of each other. When it is time to testify, these conference calls will double as a space to give feedback to each other and share our stories. We will also use these calls to give you more calls to action besides testifying. Sometimes it will be a big online push, sometimes it will be an LTE push, etc. And the only way to know about it is to join the calls and make a commitment to be on the call every time.

Some weeks may be more interactive than others, but hoping on the conference call every time will ensure that you have the most up to date materials and talking points.

Tips and Tricks

Conference calls will only be successful if the participants on the call use them to their advantage. If there is something that you want added to the agenda or feel should be discussed, it is generally best practice to email Kevin or Joseluis 24 hours prior to the conference call requesting that the item be added. Of course, there will be times when an urgent matter comes up within those 24 hours, but just to be sure we are as organized as can be, an email prior will be best!

Folks on the call assume they'll be getting ideas and feedback! Don't be shy if you have an idea. And also use "Step Up, Step Back" — know when an idea has already been stated, and track how much you are talking vs other folks on the call. If you're talking less than others, find a way to speak up! If you are talking more than others, step back when you can to give others the space to contribute.

Your Goal

Attend all of the conference calls.

Push Yourself

Successfully recruit two friends to join the calls!

Step 6: Attend a Rally, Canvass, or Phonebank

Eventually there will be rallies/lobby days in Salem, canvasses and phone banks in your community that you can plug into. A lobby day or rally is a time when our community will go down to Salem to talk to legislators and make our voices heard. A phone bank will be an action where we call other Oregonians to urge them to call their legislator, or recruit other volunteers. A canvass is an event where we will either knock on other Oregonian's doors, or street-team to get pledge cards filled out so that we can grow our base.

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

In order to push lawmakers to act, we will need a groundswell of Oregonians advocating for more school funding, but only at a strategic time. Once canvasses, phone banks, and rallies/lobby days are announced, jump on the chance to join them! This tactic is tried and true for legislative efforts for the last several decades.

Tips and Tricks

Unlike contacting your legislator, making calls or knocking on doors of voters and other volunteers is fairly scripted, and for good reason! It will be important to follow the script. If someone asks you a question that you don't know the answer to, don't make it up! Instead, ask one of the campaign staff. If one isn't available, let the person on the phone know that you'll pass the question of to us, and we'll take it from there.

For lobby days and rallies, the key is to bring energy! During rallies and lobby days, the State Capitol will be flooded with folks advocating for more school funding. You will be part of that energy, so be sure to bring it! Families for Oregon Schools has made it easy to download rally signs. If you want to make your own, the key is to have a catchy message that is short and sweet! For inspiration, click here.

Also, please be respectful to staff and lawmakers while participating. We want to make sure our message is loud and clear, and we want to urge legislators to take action in a constructive way.

Your Goal

Complete at least one shift for two of the three listed items by the end of the campaign: rally, canvass, phone bank.

Push Yourself

Complete at least 10 shifts of canvassing, phone banking, or rallies by the end of legislative session (June 30).

Step 7: Write a Letter to the Editor

Submitting letters to the editor is a good warm-up to testifying and sharing your story to legislators. A short letter that gets published either in your local paper, online, or in a statewide paper will help other readers see the important issue at hand. If you are interested in submitting a letter to the editor, you'll work directly with our Communications Director, Katherine, to help craft the letter and submit it to a local paper. Often, organizations like Our Oregon, OEA and others will amplify the message in your letter by sharing it on social media.

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

Letters to the Editor are an effective way to get your story out to your community and could create a ripple effect that will get others involved! Not only could it help get others involved, it will be seen by your legislators and will act as another point of pressure for them to act on increasing school funding.

Tips and Tricks

Check out the submission guidelines for your local paper, typically located on the opinion page. We've included some helpful links below. You'll want to stay within their word limit, submit it to the email provided, and include the information — often name, address, and phone number — that the paper requests to improve the odds of getting published.

Write! One of the best advocacy tools we have is our lived experience, so be sure to anchor your letter in why investing in schools matters to you. It can be powerful to share

you story and then close with a call to action — in this case, to fully fund Oregon schools! It can be powerful to share your story.

Submit and follow up! If the paper intends to publish your letter, you should get confirmation from an editor. If you don't hear back after five business days, it is worth a call or email to the opinion page manager about if and when they intend to publish your letter.

Don't get discouraged! Sometimes, your letter won't make publication. But there are plenty of ways to make sure your message reaches your community — including re-submitting to another news source or sharing your letter on Facebook with your network.

Your Goal

Get one Letter to the Editor published.

Push Yourself

Help a friend or a family member in your community submit a letter.

Step 8: Testify at a Hearing and/or ask a Question at a Town Hall

Testimonies and personal stories at hearings and town halls are the best way to get to the heart of a legislator. Similar to postcard writing and email/phone calls, testimonies are a vehicle for you to share your experience with legislators, but this time in person. Testimonies occur during public hearings, which is generally the first step to a proposal being either voted for, or being rejected.

We will be sure to notify you when there is an opportunity to testify. The best thing you can do is join the Families for OR Schools Facebook group and the Invest in Oregon email list to be sure you stay up to date!

Town halls are equally important because legislators need to hear from their constituents when they have in-district events. While the town hall is not a place for testimony, it is a good way to ask a question specific to revenue, and get your voice heard in a more intimate setting.

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

If you don't come to Salem or to your legislators town hall to tell your story, no one else is going to do it for you. Only you know what you and your family has experienced, and your unique, authentic voice is one of the most powerful tools you have in advocacy. Legislators feel authenticity, and if you bring that to a public hearing, it will be extremely powerful and could be the difference between a yes or a no vote.

Tips and Tricks

You will want to prep your testimony ahead of time. If you are interested, please let Kevin or Joseluis know so that they can send you materials that you can reference. Prepare and practice ahead of time so you feel comfortable! Sometimes even really confident public speakers get nervous talking in front of a legislative committee or at in front of a crowd at a town hall. We are here to help guide your testimony, and we can even help you draft sample questions!

Your Goal

Testify at one of the hearings, whether the Capitol, or during a traveling community hearing such as the Ways & Means Roadshow.

Push Yourself

Share your testimony on social media after the hearing so that you can engage other online activists.

Step 9: *Collect Stories*

Now that you have shared your story via testimony and/or a letter to the editor, it's time to engage your friends to do the same thing. Everyone has a story that matters, and as someone who has been involved in this advocacy work, you can help bring stories out from other community members. Use the prompts that you used for your testimony, your postcards and emails, and work with friends to draw out their stories, then help them share with us. Sharing their story can be as easy as filling out one of Invest in Oregon's story cards. You can get physical copies of those from Kevin or Joseluis. Or you can direct them to fill them out online by having them go to this site.

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

The more stories we have to share, the better! Legislators do not like hearing from the same people time after time. Having a diverse array of stories that offer different perspectives from various geographic regions and schools will bolster our case that we need more school funding!

Tips and Tricks

Having your friend fill out a story form is the best way to get the ball rolling. Share your experience about how easy it was to share your own. Offer to be a sounding board for them to talk through their story and brainstorm ideas, if they want!

Your Goal

Have three friends fill out a story card.

Push Yourself

Host an event with other parents or friends in the community and invite everyone to share their story with us on a story card.

Step 10: *Recruit other Parents/Small Business Owners/Community Leaders to Join the Cause*

Think about your friends who have talked to you about their frustrations regarding school funding, go through your Facebook friends, and the contacts in your phone to recruit more folks.

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

If we are going to be successful in the legislature, and eventually at the ballot, we will need to multiply our efforts! You are the best person to get your friends involved. They will trust you, and be more likely to get involved knowing your story and your passion. Having a number of community leaders, parents, and small business owners to count on when things in Salem start moving, and if and when we are on the ballot, is a must.

Tips and Tricks

Share with them this guide! Tell them how easy your experience has been. Talk about all the wonderful people you've met since joining the campaign! Share your story and ask for theirs. When asking your friends, you want to make a hard ask — meaning using strong language. Avoid phrases like “if you have time,” or “would you maybe consider...” Instead, say things like, “I know that your children and my children can't wait any longer, can I count on you to join this fight?”

Start small! Ask people to join the Facebook group, or get on a conference call, then invite them to other in-person events that make a difference.

Your Goal

Recruit three friends to come out for at least one campaign event, whether it is a rally, a phone bank, a canvass, or a hearing.

Push Yourself

Recruit five friends who consistently (at least 80% of the time) attend campaign events, or are involved online.

Step 11: *Join one of our programs, and be a leader on the campaign!*

This campaign will have three different avenues that you can use to become a leader on

our campaign: join our “Business Walks” program, join our “Speaker’s Bureau” program, or volunteer to manage our Facebook group.

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

- **Business Walks:** This program is where you commit to canvassing your favorite small businesses that you frequent, and getting the owner to endorse our cause, and join our movement. We will want to make sure they know that endorsing is the first thing they can do, but certainly not the only thing. If you are interested in joining this program, contact Joseluis or Kevin to get more direction.
- **Speaker’s Bureau:** This program is where you will help us give presentations to different groups and PTAs in Oregon to help build our list of supporters! If you are interested in joining this program, contact Joseluis or Kevin to get more direction.
- **Manage the Facebook page:** This leadership role will mean messaging every new member of the group, and asking them to post to the page with a story of why they want more funding for schools. Additionally, the manager of the Facebook group will moderate posts and ensure that there is no foul language or inappropriate behavior that takes place on the page.

Tips and Tricks

All three of these programs are at an advanced level of involvement. If you are at this step, congratulations! You are officially a leader on this campaign. For an extensive list of tips and tricks for the program that you are joining, please contact Kevin or Joseluis.

Your Goal

Dependent on Program

Push Yourself

Dependent on Program

Step 12: Host a phone bank, canvass, or letter writing party

Now that you have done nearly all the opportunities this campaign has to offer, it is time for you to engage folks and develop other leaders in your area!

How is this going to help us secure more school funding?

By hosting a campaign event either at your house or at another location, you will amplify our impact when it comes to making calls, sending postcards, writing letters to the editor together, or knocking on doors. Plus it is a fun way to get more people in your network committed to the work!

Tips and Tricks

If you are at this stage of involvement, contact Joseluis or Kevin so we can support your event with materials, and potentially even join you in person to help.

Your Goal

Host at least one phonebank, canvass, or postcard writing party.

Push Yourself

Host a minimum of 5 phonebanks, canvasses, or postcard writing party.

What now?

Take the first step now!

If you are someone who has limited time, just doing the first few steps will be critical and is essential to us winning more school funding.

However, if you have reached the end of this guide and have other ideas about how to get parents, community members, and small business owners involved? Kevin (sullivan@ouregon.org) and Joseluis (joseluis@ouregon.org) want to hear them!

Every time you complete a step, email Kevin and Joseluis to let them know. We will be keeping track of where folks are at so that we can provide support. Additionally, it will be paramount to stay in more constant contact the further you get into the guide to debrief how things are going and hear your feedback.

It will take each and every one of us, no matter our level of involvement, to finally invest in the schools that our students deserve. Thank you!