



February 11, 2016

Senator Mark Hass, Chair
Members of the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Hass and Members of the Committee,

The Washington County Kids Fund is a coalition of over 120 organizations and individuals in Washington County. We wish to support passage of SB1545. Our goal is to obtain sustainable funding that will support early childhood, after school, and summer programs for kids in our county. This bill will provide a mechanism to accomplish that goal.

The need for additional support for these programs is great:

- **Child Poverty is Rising:** Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) eligibility escalated from 22% of Washington County students in 2000 to 41.5% in 2014. The number of schools with more than 50% FRL eligible students increased from 10 to 33 schools in the same period.
- **Child abuse continues to affect** approximately 400 children per year in the county, which adds up to approximately 7,200 abused children over an 18 year period. Abuse leads to school failure, juvenile crime, addiction to drugs and alcohol, and early sexual activity.
- **75% of children under 5 years of age and living in poverty do not have access to affordable, quality child care.** Only 27% of children eligible in the county for Head Start and Early Head Start are able to participate in those programs due to a lack of funding.
- **There are not enough after school programs for older children.** Too many are left unsupervised or with unskilled child care providers. Programs exist but are either expensive and/or have long waiting lists.
- **Too few summer programs;** By the fifth grade, children from families with low incomes academically fall behind their classmates by as much as three years without summer support. Summer programs need to be expanded and offered to kids to combat this problem.

With the passage of SB1545 members of the community will be able to pursue development of funding for expansion of existing programs and implementation of new ones that will support the academic success of our children.

These programs are a win/win for all:

1. Our children get the programs they need to succeed in school 0-18. It provides enough money to make a difference.
2. The money is locally raised and spent in the local area - in addition to funding programs, it creates jobs and stimulates the local economy.
3. It is budget-neutral – a small amount covers overhead, the rest goes to programs.

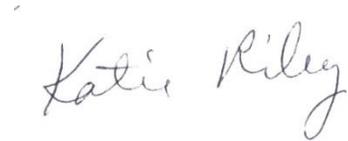
SB1545 p2.

4. The result: young children ready to learn, increased graduation rates, kids engaged in healthy activities, lower drop-out rates, and lower juvenile crime rates.

Special Districts will allow the people of each area to choose their own solutions to these growing needs. In Washington County our polling showed that more than 51 percent of voters would support raising sustainable funding through a local tax.

Thank you for supporting Oregon's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Riley".

Katie Riley
Chair
Washington County Kids Fund
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