

February 23, 2016

Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue:

I am writing in support of SB 1545 Children's Special Districts Bill. By providing a mechanism to raise funds for much needed services for children is not only a practical alternative to passing a county-wide local levy, but a much needed resource to meet specific needs in specific areas where it is needed most.

In my professional life, I run a non-profit agency that provides out-of-school time services to children living in poverty in western Washington County and who are in need of academic supports that their families are not able to provide. Our program and others like it, not only provide a safe place for children to go afterschool, but a snack, homework assistance, and activities that promote social-emotional wellbeing that is often missing among the poor. We are trying to help children graduate from high school and go on to college or a living-wage job to help end childhood poverty.

We rely on grants to fund these services but most grants require matching funds and usually only last for 1-3 years with the amounts being reduced each year. These foundation grants are designed to provide seed money to allow non-profits to seek permanent funding within a specific timeframe. I will tell you that there is no permanent funding for these services even though they are research-based and proven effective in keeping kids engaged and increasing their academic ability. Non-profits and schools end up not providing services once funding runs out and children are left roaming the halls and school yards because there is nothing and no one at home since most families have both parents working at often two, minimum-wage jobs (often in farm labor) to support them.

Our funding for the 120 children we served last year, and the 80 registered this year, will end for our program this year, as will many others across the state. We are all seeking and competing for other grants to keep programs going.

Please consider affording children the same opportunity enjoyed by "districts" concerned about parks, water, and public safety. Ongoing, local investments in our future workforce by those who agree to pay for them should be an option!

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for this important bill.

*Maria C Rubio*

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Portland, Oregon