

April 5, 2017  
Senate Education Committee  
Re: SB 353-1

Dear Senator Roblan and members of the committee,

As you may recall, I spent decades in Oregon's education system at the state, regional and local levels, advocating for change and revolution. Currently, I follow education politics with interest and concern. In the past year, I have volunteered with the campaign for Measure 98 and was delighted that Oregonians supported the measure by an impressive margin. That said, the budgetary challenges you face are real and I fully understand that competing priorities are extremely difficult.

In this context, I would appreciate your consideration of the following;

1) Measure 98 was overwhelmingly supported by Oregon voters. I am aware of the consternation of those who believe we should not set policy and budget priorities through the initiative process. However, this initiative was sponsored and supported by a broad and diverse coalition, with business and industry strongly vested. This coalition is interested foremost, in increasing the likelihood that ALL students achieve high school graduation and have a plan for what comes next. This is not a coalition that should be ignored or alienated but rather embraced as leaders and advocates.

2) Oregon has attempted high school reform for decades and our outcomes are still unacceptable. The new federal administration predicts that federal intervention will diminish and responsibility for outcomes will reside at the state level. So how will we justify our current performance to Oregon voters at the same time we formulate plans for additional revenue?

3) I would submit to you, that when (1990's) there was a clear focus on high school reform and an emphasis on students developing life skills and experiences we were on the right track. The egregious and narrow focus of NCLB shifted our trajectory in Oregon and the result was not positive. The potential repeal of 40/40/20 is a mistake. With no targets and no accountability, as proposed in SB 353, what is the expectation for results?

4) Partnerships between business/industry and education, geared to improve workforce training and economic development, have virtually disappeared as an integrated policy approach. Measure 98 has the potential to resurrect this paradigm of collaboration, work-based learning, apprenticeships and meaningful education. In addition, the focus on preventing dropouts and increasing the opportunity for dual college credit is critical. Every high school in Oregon deserves this targeted investment and should in turn, be accountable for improvement.

In closing, I offer a personal and heartfelt observation. The labor and education establishment has perpetually focused on money, specifically wages and benefits. The investment that Oregon makes in the SSF and PERS system should not come without expectations. It is my sincere hope that you and the Senate membership will embrace the full intent of the relatively small investment in Measure 98. **Please do not gut the measure by considering SB 353-1 and reducing the funds for implementation.**

It is my sincere hope, that you and your fellow Senators will stand firm on the demand for improved outcomes for students. Use this initiative as a foundation to build a more comprehensive, outcome-driven approach to high school improvement. Leadership is what we need....not a fight to weaken and repeal an initiative that can have a powerful influence and has the support of a broad coalition and a majority Oregon voters. Invite that coalition to the table for a stronger future...we need to step forward not back.

Respectfully,

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