



SB 353-1 Establishes Task Force on the High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness

Testimony for the Senate Education Committee – Jody Wisner – 4.6.2017

Tax Fairness Oregon fully supports SB 353-1 because it recognizes the importance of variations across Oregon’s school districts and honors the rights and capacities of educators and educational supporters to make quality decisions at the local level to meet the College and Career Readiness Needs of our students.

We spent time vetting ballot Measure 98 this fall but did not support the measure because we were concerned about the fiscal implications in the light of an already underfunded Quality Education Model. We concluded that Measure 98 was designed with all the best intentions to solve an important problem. However, the version approved by the public is so prescriptive, that it will actually create more problems than it solves. As written, Measure 98 assumes that every school/district has the same issues, needs the same solutions and exacting directions for spending the same amount of money. Some important observations from TFO professional educators -

- SB 353-1 **removes an extraordinary number of “musts”, “shalls”, and “may nots”** from the bill. The revised language shows respect for professional knowledge, professional experiences, and local context.
- The revised bill will actually **support more successful implementation and potentially lead to better outcomes**. Although every program/approach identified in Measure 98 is credible for increasing graduation rates and attendance, none of them work equally for all students and communities.
- The current bill **increases program flexibility** recognizing that at some future moment each of the current ‘best approaches/programs’ will be overshadowed by a new evidence-based successful idea.

One final observation—If the QEM were fully funded, measures like 98 might not be necessary. In the words of Oregonians who responded to the Oregon Rising project: “Imagine if every child had that favorite class, that favorite teacher, to help pull him or her through the rough spots that every student experiences. **We would surely improve graduation rates**. We would undoubtedly improve motivations. We would certainly set Oregon students up for success.”

We read the bills and follow the money