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Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee

I am Bobbie Weber, recently retired Faculty Research Associate at Oregon State University. I have been involved in the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment (OKA) and other efforts to improve children's school readiness for many years. I served as member of the original OKA workgroup and continued to serve on groups that advised the Oregon Department of Education as OKA was implemented. These groups included persons from multiple sectors including K-12, research, and early learning. I am convinced OKA is a vital tool in Oregon's efforts to increase student success and for that reason am opposed to HB 2318.

Since its beginning, misunderstanding of OKA has been common. As shared by ODE in 2015, the goals of OKA are to: 1) give families, schools, communities, and educational policy makers a snapshot of the school readiness skills of Oregon's incoming kindergartners, and 2): facilitate the allocation of resources to children, schools, and communities most in need. OKA was not created to focus on individual children. Rather, an assessment of entering children is needed to measure how well young children are being served. Substantial research documents that competence at the time of school entry influences a child's whole education career. OKA provides vital information on how well a community, or we as a whole state, are preparing our young children for success. OKA findings enable a) communities to know the areas where more support is needed in the early years and b) schools to know which skill areas present the greatest challenges to entering children. Accountability is focused on how well communities and the state are meeting children's needs in the early years. Kindergarten entry is the first time we see all of Oregon's children at that same time. It provides the opportunity to assess how well we are preparing our young children for success.

Following are examples of how OKA findings are currently being used. They:

- Enable communities to see what is and is not working in the early years. Early Learning Hubs use the findings to bring supports to school catchment areas in which children are less prepared.
- Enable families and communities to effectively improve supports for early learning by examining which strategies actually result in improved scores over time.
- Increase schools' knowledge of the areas with which entering children are likely to need additional support
- Identify groups of children, families, and communities across the state need additional supports so that all children enter school ready for success.

OKA data are playing a vital role in Oregon efforts to increase student success. Analyses of OKA data are providing critical information, including finding that:

- Large amount of variance exist between individual elementary schools, often within the same school district. Findings help Identify school catchment areas in which children are far less prepared. (Lipscomb et al., 2017)
- Variance among subgroups of children document that children from minority groups and those speaking a language other than English less well prepared than English speaking nonminority students. (Tremaine, Mashburn, & Yelverton, 2017)

Schools and Early Learning Hubs are using findings from analyses of OKA data to improve outcomes for targeted children and communities.

- Schools creating interventions that reach children in targeted areas just prior to kindergarten entry (*Kids in Transition, Mashburn-Early Learning Transition Program*)
- Early Learning Hubs and their partners are targeting communities and groups of children with additional supports.

Thank you for your time working on this important topic.

References

- Lipscomb, S. T., Miao, A., Finders, J., Hatfield, B., Pears, K., Kothari, B., and the Oregon School Readiness Consortium (2017). *Understanding Communities Sheds Light on School Readiness*. Brief available from: <http://health.oregonstate.edu/osrrc/policy-briefs>
- Tremaine, E, Mashburn, A., Yelverton, R. (2017, October). *Profiles of Children's Kindergarten Readiness in Oregon*. <http://blearlylearninghub.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Tremaine-ELH-Presentation-.pdf>