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Dear Chair Doherty and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing to oppose House Bill 2318, which would ban statewide or district mandated commercially developed assessments in children between prekindergarten and second grade in Oregon.

I am the Katherine E. Smith Professor of Healthy Children and Families and the Director of the Hallie E. Ford Center for Healthy Children and Families at Oregon State University. I am also an early childhood researcher who specializes in children's school readiness and optimizing children's early school success. I have spent my career focusing on the self-regulation and social-emotional skills that best predict children's short- and long-term success including graduation from college. I have been involved in the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment (OKA) since 2012 when I was asked to review and recommend assessments that Oregon could use to capture the most important skills that children need to be successful as they enter kindergarten. I have also served on a national panel at the U.S. Department of Education that examined Kindergarten Assessments around the country. All of these experiences have increased my understanding of the research regarding kindergarten assessments and the consequences of House Bill 2318.

There is a strong research base for the measures used in the OKA. In 2012, an Oregon State University team I led along with my colleagues at the University of Oregon, led by Dr. Jane Squires, reviewed measures designed to assess kindergarten readiness. Based on recommendations from this work, the state adopted the Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS), which measures children's self-regulation and social-emotional skills through teacher observation and ratings, and the EasyCBM, which assesses children early literacy and math skills. We picked these domains based on substantive research indicating that they were among the strongest predictors of children's school success and later academic achievement. Many long-term studies have shown that early achievement assessments predict readiness for learning and long-term outcomes. The teacher ratings of social-emotional behavior and self-regulation offer a window on important aspects of children's readiness that go beyond these more academic skills. Moreover, the OKA was designed to be developmentally appropriate for young children with the least amount of burden on children. It is not a "high stakes" assessment used to determine who is "ready" for kindergarten and who is not. Instead, it is designed to provide a consistent source of information for schools, school districts, and the state for planning early childhood supports for children and families. The OKA measures how well we as a state have prepared young children for success.

Below I outline ways that OKA data has informed policy and practice along with problems with Bill 2318:
1. **The OKA provides critical statewide data that documents children's skills as they enter kindergarten and how those skills predict later school success**.
    a. Children's self-regulation scores on the OKA significantly and substantively predict third grade reading and math skills (McClelland et al., 2018). This means that the skills children walk into kindergarten with predict how successful they will be in school. This information is important for early identification and intervention.
    b. Research by colleagues at Oregon State University (Lipscomb et al., 2019) documents children's OKA scores based on where they live, and on resources like child care slots, income, and employment in their communities. This provides critical information for allocating resources to best support our children most at risk for school failure.

2. **OKA data provides Early Learning Hubs with information for identifying children at risk and resources for prevention and early intervention**, which we know is important for supporting children's school success.
3. **The OKA data has highlighted for the first time in Oregon the importance of self-regulation and social-emotional skills for early learning and school success**. This data was not previously collected and provides vital information to support children as they enter kindergarten.
4. **Banning commercial assessments is not a solution**.
   a. Measures are developed for different purposes. As one example, the CBRS measure of self-regulation and social-emotional skills, is a non-commercial measure but there have been no funds available to develop norms or other interpretive guidelines because it was developed as a research tool. In contrast, commercial assessments often prioritize norms and interpretation but do not prioritize the research needed to validate these assessments.
5. **This bill represents an extreme approach that will have unanticipated consequences and contribute to our failure to support children**.
   a. Oregon needs to better support the OKA so that data is used more effectively than is currently the case. Results increase a school's understanding of areas which community children enter school needing additional support. Getting this information in a timely way can support learning.
   b. Creating a task force would be one way to examine these issues more thoughtfully.

As a professor who is actively engaged in ways to support children's school readiness in Oregon, nationally and internationally, it is clear that Bill 2318 would move us backwards and be detrimental to our efforts to support children and families.

Sincerely,

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