

April 11, 2019

Testimony on Student Success Act (HB 2019)

Chairs Smith Warner and Roblan, Vice-Chairs Knopp and Smith, and members of the committee,

My name is Daniel Hauser, tax policy analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy, and I respectfully submit this testimony on the Student Success Act, House Bill 2019.

Underinvestment in Oregon's education system has left generations of Oregon's children without the services and support they deserve. The Student Success Act promises tremendous strides towards addressing the long-term underfunding of Oregon's schools. The education investments would benefit children across our state and the package contains investments explicitly targeting two populations where Oregon most desperately needs to invest: low-income communities and communities of color. Two examples of investments to address the existing disparities for these communities are additional funding for higher poverty school districts and investments in early childhood education provided by culturally-specific organizations.

At the same time, legislators should recognize that the needs of Oregon's students extend beyond the proposed investments. The Joint Committee should build upon the strong foundation included in the package to push even more resources into Oregon's education system. One opportunity to add additional revenue to the package would be to include Complete Reporting, which would raise hundreds of millions from the largest multinational corporations and their wealthy shareholders.

The other opportunity for lawmakers to improve upon the education package is to include more targeted tax relief for low- and moderate-income Oregonians. A refundable tax credit targeted to the poorest Oregonians and seniors would keep these members of our community from falling further behind as they struggle to make ends meet. And we believe the package should expand Oregon's Earned Income Tax Credit to help low-wage working families meet their basic needs.

I look forward to providing more detailed comments on the revenue half of the package once we have legislation to analyze. Expect our evaluation to target the progressivity, equity, and adequacy of any proposed revenue raising options.

The existing education package is promising and historic. Lawmakers should build on this foundation by expanding the investments and targeting tax benefits to Oregon's poorest, seniors, and working families.