



Oregon Public Health Association

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Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair
Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chairs Keny-Guyer, Noble, and Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Public Health Association (OPHA) supports the passage of SB 543, authorizing the creation of children's special districts. OPHA is an organization of professionals supporting public health in Oregon and is an affiliate of the American Public Health Association.

As part of the mission of OPHA we support the development and protection of Oregon's youth, which will ultimately impact their health. This bill provides a mechanism to implement sustainable funding for programs for children and youth that allows them to spend their time outside school hours in positive activities that support their academic success under the supervision of responsible adults. For many children and youth throughout Oregon, there are no adults at home after school and during the summer and they are left to their own devices. They may spend all day watching television or wander the streets with other children or youth. Often nutritious food is not available. Programs that stimulate their imagination, assist with homework, develop career interests, and include nutritious snacks can point them toward becoming contributing members of the community rather than a potential drain. Programs like these also provide support and reassurance to working parents who may not have the means to pay for child care or expensive day camps. The willingness of community members to support these efforts will provide a modest investment that is repaid in preventing future problems.

While fears have been expressed by some regarding potential effects on tax compression, we believe that it is time to prioritize the welfare of our children and youth. Although others have expressed concerns regarding potential duplication of services, this bill does not mandate any action but merely allows people in a potential district to make that determination themselves. There are many areas in Oregon that do not have any services, particularly in high poverty areas.

We hope you will agree it is time to help local communities help their children.

Sincerely,

Jessica Nischik-Long, MPH
Executive Director