

April 22, 2019

Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Alonso Leon and Helt, and Members of the House Committee on Education:

My name is Dawn Prochovnic. I am a parent, school and community volunteer, small business owner, early literacy and language consultant, children's author, and vocal advocate for strong school libraries. I am writing to share my **support for HB 3263**.

Numerous studies have shown that strong school library programs, led by certified teacher librarians, are linked with higher student achievement levels. (To note: I counted 60 such studies back in 2014 when I first started looking deeply into this issue). Students in schools across Oregon without full-time teacher librarians are at a disadvantage, and research shows this disadvantage is amplified for minority students and students who are poor. Recognizing this, current Oregon law requires school districts to account for strong school library programs in their Continuous Improvement Plan (CIPs) for the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Despite this, school library programs across the state continue to suffer year after year, budget crisis after budget crisis.

Some background: In 2009, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 2586, which amended ORS 327.297 and 329.095 and intended to hold school districts accountable for creating and maintaining strong school libraries. Sadly, this legislation was unable to prevent school districts from decimating school library programs when budgets ran thin in years such as 2012, when for example, the Beaverton School District went from a school district staffed with a certified teacher librarian *and* a classified library assistant in nearly every school, to a school district with **a single district-level librarian serving 39,000 children in 51 schools**, some of which were staffed with classified instructional assistants. Unfortunately this dramatic level of cutback still "passed" the ODE's CIP requirements under the 2009 law. Speaking from first-hand experience, the Beaverton School District has never recovered from this loss, and the students in the district continue to receive sub-optimal library resources and instructional services—despite the best efforts of the limited number of certified and classified library professionals that are currently employed by the District.

Recognizing that in addition to ongoing budgetary shortfalls, Oregon law contains loopholes that make school libraries particularly vulnerable during cutbacks, the ODE eventually adopted clear library media and related instructional standards to address some of these loopholes. ODE's school library standards must now be enjoined with existing legislation related to academic content standards to prevent school districts from further diminishing school library programs every time our state is faced with budgetary shortfalls. **HB 3263 is a step in the right direction.**

Current legislation successfully holds districts accountable to adopted academic content and instructional standards for other required subjects such as mathematics, science, English, history, economics, civics, physical education, health, the arts, and world languages. HB 3263 would provide school districts across Oregon with a clear message

that library-related skills including Information Literacy, Reading Engagement, Social Responsibility and Technology Integration (the four learning strands in the ODE's school library standards) are integral to K-12 students' ability to understand, evaluate, use, produce, and communicate ideas using ever-changing technologies—baseline requirements for college and career readiness and eventual success of 21st Century learners. HB 3263 would eliminate the current loophole that enables school districts to be “in compliance” with the law when they are not in compliance with the intent of the law.

I want every child in Oregon to have equitable access to a strong school library program that is staffed by a certified teacher librarian and a classified library assistant, and that benefits from accountability to the current minimum requirements in the ODE's adopted library media and instructional standards. **Please support HB 3263.**

Sincerely,
Dawn Prochovnic, MA
Washington County, Oregon