

Dear Committee Members

I want to reaffirm my support of SB 543. I submitted testimony last session and continue to support this bill.

Local communities need to have the option of voting on Children's Service Districts to provide out of school services to students who are more likely to fall between the cracks especially latch key children especially where both parents are working or whose children struggle in school.

Research shows that the earlier we get children in pre-school learning environments, especially birth to 3, the better they do in school in their later years. And of course for students who come from low income families they benefit from non-school programs which enrich their out of school learning experiences.

Having taught in Pacific University's MAT-5th year program for 15 years, in addition to a career as a political scientist and most importantly as a parent of two children, the husband of a youth services librarian who was an elementary teacher for 8 years and the grandfather of an 8 year old granddaughter who benefitted from such programs in Portland, my opinions are not just based on theory but lived experience.

Those who oppose this legislation fear that current priorities may face competition for scarce funds that may lead to less funding for those programs. This is enabling legislation and does not automatically result in automatic formation of any new district; however, citizens should be able to decide if children's needs should be a priority. I believe in local option, as is the case of ESDs...

Respectfully,

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