

MARK HASS
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 14



COMMITTEES:
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Joint Student Success
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OREGON STATE SENATE

May 30, 2019

Superintendent Colt Gill
Oregon Department of Education
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310-0203

Dear Superintendent Gill,

During the 2019 session, Senate Bill 456 was introduced to help eliminate barriers to graduation. We heard from advocates, teachers, parents and students, who all expressed concerns about requiring a pseudo exit exam, with limited alternatives. They explained that the exams only serve to harm students who fail them. These are students who have passing high school GPAs and have completed all other high school requirements, and yet, too often they will not graduate.

Recent studies show that reliance on exit exams, even pseudo exit exams, is tied to higher high school dropout rates. There is no evidence that students who pass these tests are more likely to succeed in college or in their careers.

Currently, OAR 581-022-2115 is too broad and unclear about how school districts should develop and administer local assessment options for students to demonstrate proficiency in the essential skills. School districts are supposed to give an alternative to standardized tests, but the current rule leaves it to the school board's discretion.

To address this issue, we request that you convene a group of stakeholders to review OAR 581-022-2115. The purpose will be to address concerns around the Essential Learning Skills requirement for graduation. Specifically, the group should work to address issues around students' accessibility to alternative assessments.

If the group concludes that the essential skills requirement is not a balanced assessment to empower meaningful student learning, as outlined in the white paper "A New Path for Oregon" by ODE and education stakeholders, then we ask for the group to develop a new assessment tool. We suggest looking into Washington's new law, House Bill 1599 Sec. 102, or Tennessee's "Ready to Graduate" indicator. These assessment options are individualized, well-rounded and do not impede a student's ability to graduate if they have met the GPA and credit requirements.

Overall the goal of the group should be to ensure that OAR 581-022-2115 provides for a meaningful assessment tool that is clear, consistent across all school districts, and uplifts historically underserved students. Most of all, any assessment tool must not impede a student's graduation if they have met all other requirements.

Thank you for your consideration,



Senator Mark Hass



Senator Arnie Roblan



Representative Barbara Smith Warner