



March 23, 2021

Teresa Alonso Leon, Chair
Courtney Neron, Vice-Chair
Suzanne Weber, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Education
Oregon Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Disability Rights Oregon Testimony on HB 2962

Dear Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chair Neron, and Vice-Chair Weber:

Disability Rights Oregon submits this testimony on HB 2962. Disability Rights Oregon is the federally-designated Protection and Advocacy organization for the state of Oregon. Our mission is to protect the rights of people with disabilities, including the rights of students with disabilities.

HB 2962 addresses a pressing current issue: the loss of educational achievement for K-12 students as a result of the COVID pandemic. Almost all students have suffered as a result of the changes to their curriculum during the pandemic. The lost educational opportunities, however, have not been evenly distributed. Children who are homeless, children in foster care, children who are Black, Hispanic, or Indigenous, children from immigrant families, and children with disabilities have often lost much more ground than other students. Lack of internet access, lack of a stable, quiet place to do work, parents who are essential workers unable to offer support throughout the school day, and unique disability-related needs have dramatically reduced the efficacy of the limited educational programming available in the last 12 months.

Federal law relating to the rights of children with disabilities, children in foster care, and children who are homeless require specific efforts from the Oregon Department of Education and local school districts to ensure those youth get a free, adequate public education. Those children continue to have the right to an adequate education throughout the pandemic. They have a right to compensatory education on an individual basis that would make up for these losses. A systemic review of specific gaps in progress relating to youth with disabilities, youth in foster care, and youth who are homeless will help school districts make systemic plans to redress these deficits.

DRO strongly supports HB 2962 with the -1 amendment, including a specific analysis of the effect of the pandemic on the academic achievement of students with disabilities and other underrepresented student groups. While I would hope that each school district would think to

511 SW 10th Avenue, Suite 200 / Portland, OR 97205
Voice: 503-243-2081 or 1-800-452-1694 / Fax: 503-243-1738 / www.droregon.org
Disability Rights Oregon is the Protection and Advocacy System for Oregon

engage the needs of these unique students, further direction may help ensure that each school district conducts a thorough review. HB 2962 is an important step in recovering the progress lost in individual education.

I am happy to discuss these matters by telephone at 503-243-2081 x223 or by email at tstenson@droregon.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Stenson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "T".

Thomas Stenson
Deputy Legal Director