



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 7, 2021

To: [Senate Committee on Education](#)
Chair, Senator Michael Dembrow
Vice-Chair, Senator Chuck Thomsen
Members of the Committee

Re: [SB 596](#) - Prohibits State Board of Education from requiring, and school districts from administering, certain assessments to students enrolled or preparing to enroll in prekindergarten through grade two. Makes exception for assessments administered for diagnostic purposes as required under state or federal law - **SUPPORT**

While we recognize that SB 596 is receiving a courtesy hearing with no work session scheduled, we feel compelled to provide testimony. LWVOR since 2011, has followed the roll-out of early learning, pre-K, and other early childhood programs umbrellaed under the Early Learning Division in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Education. League Positions are at the end of this testimony.

Early in the history of the Oregon Early Learning Division, one of the “measurements of success” for children in prekindergarten programs was an instrument called the **Oregon Kindergarten Assessment, which was administered to students entering the public school system in kindergarten or first grade.** The intention was to determine and substantiate children’s readiness for success in kindergarten rather than actually testing and assessing individual students—but individual students were and are subjected to this test. Some experts in early learning expressed concerns that the test:

Does not measure readiness: The results of the literacy and math components of the test cannot tell if children are ready for kindergarten because they assess what children *are expected to learn* in kindergarten, rather than what they should know *and be able to do before* they get there.

Does not provide enough information, or the right kind of information, to achieve its stated purposes of providing baseline information to ensure all children are ready for kindergarten, informing K-12 educators on students’ strengths and needs in order to guide instruction, identifying achievement gaps, and providing data that can be used to measure future progress.

Is not aligned with the State’s goals for children: It does not reflect state guidelines for early learning, which guide preschool instruction.

Is too narrow in its approach to literacy and math: The test measures only lower order thinking skills. Higher order (analytical) thinking is not addressed. Important aspects of literacy (language, book knowledge) and numeracy that are predictive of school readiness are not included.

Is not culturally appropriate: Many low-income and minority group children are at a disadvantage because they have not encountered the academic content of the test in their homes. Hispanic children who know the names of letters or their sounds in Spanish, but not in English, are not accurately assessed.

A number of early childhood education experts in Oregon contend that this assessment has provided unnecessary stress on children, has promoted inappropriate learning before kindergarten and has not provided kindergarten teachers with useful data for informing instruction. **The Early Learning Division has evolved and matured substantially since its inception in 2011 and now has many other “measures of success” in place. Reliance on this inappropriate and ineffective assessment of young children should cease.**

Our colleague and mentor Dr. Stephanie Feeney, professor emerita of education at the University of Hawai'i, where she taught and administered early childhood education programs for many years and is the author of many early childhood books including [Teaching the NAEYC Code of Ethics](#), has long contended that **testing young children in this developmentally inappropriate manner violates the ethical code of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.**

[SB 596](#) (Frederick) states that except for assessments that are required to be administered for diagnostic purposes under state or federal law, and notwithstanding ORS 329.485: The Oregon State Board of Education may not develop an assessment for or require a school district to administer a state-developed assessment, a commercially developed assessment or another comparable assessment to students enrolled or preparing to enroll in prekindergarten through grade two. School districts may not administer a state-developed assessment, a commercially developed assessment or another comparable assessment to students enrolled or preparing to enroll in prekindergarten through grade two. Nothing in this subsection prohibits a classroom teacher from selecting, developing, administering or scoring an assessment for an individual classroom in any subject area in prekindergarten through grade two. As used in this subsection: A Commercially developed assessment” means an assessment that: Requires all test takers to answer the same questions, or a portion of questions selected from all possible questions, in the same manner; and (ii) Is developed and scored by an entity under a contract. “Diagnostic purposes” includes assessments for dyslexia and assessments to determine eligibility for special education or related services or for additional educational services. “Diagnostic purposes” does not include any assessments related to the social, emotional or behavioral development of any student before grade one.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this bill. We encourage its inclusion under another omnibus bill so that it may have a work session and move forward in 2021.



Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President



Chris Vogel
LWVOR Education Policy Coordinator

Cc:

Senator Frederick, Chief Bill Sponsor
Representative Karin Power, Chair House Committee on Early Childhood
Representative Lisa Reynolds, Vice-Chair House Committee on Early Childhood
Representative Jack Zika, Vice-Chair House Committee on Early Childhood
Miriam Calderon, Director Early Learning Division
Sue Miller, Chair Early Learning Council
Stephanie Feeney, PhD

The LWVOR Children at Risk *Position Statement* is based on a longitudinal 2013-2015 state and federal review as Oregon's children's services transitioned from those funded at the local level by separate County Commissions on Children and Families to a statewide oversight starting in 2011, [Children at Risk Study, LWVOR 2015](#). Concurrently, federal early childhood education grants resulted in similar changes across many states. LWVOR has continued to follow legislation, early learning hubs, the growing oversight of licensed day care, and continued guidance from the Early Learning Council.

The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that the early years of a child's life are crucial in building the foundation for educational attainment and greatly impact success or failure in later life. Early intervention and prevention measures are effective in helping children reach their full potential. The League supports policies, programs, and funding at all levels of the community and government that promote the well-being, encourage the full development, and ensure the safety of all children. These include:

- *Nutrition and food access for vulnerable children and families*
- *Access to affordable, safe, and stable housing*
- *Early screening (physical, dental, mental, and behavioral) for all children*
- *Early prenatal care and ongoing health care for children (physical, mental, dental)*
- *Access to affordable, quality child care*
- *Access to early literacy and pre-school programs, including but not limited to Early Head Start and Head Start*
- *Programs for mental health and addictions treatment for parents*
- *Family support, including but not limited to home visiting, parenting classes, and family relief nurseries*
- *Comprehensive services for children with developmental and cognitive disabilities*
- *Use of evidence-based practices in child welfare and foster care*
- *Programs to reduce poverty by providing parents with assistance in job training and education*
- *Policies and legislation to reduce racial or ethnic minority status inequities*

The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that governments, at all levels, have a responsibility to oversee and coordinate a comprehensive network of services to maximize children's readiness to be successful in school while optimizing available resources. LWVOR supports policies, programs, and funding at all levels of the community and government that promote the well-being, encourage the full development, and ensure the safety of all children. We believe that the early years of a child's life are crucial in building the foundation for educational attainment and greatly impact success or failure in later life. LWV is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the first five years of a child's life are crucial in building the foundation for educational attainment and greatly impact success or failure in later life. Additionally, LWVUS believes quality, developmentally appropriate and voluntary early learning experiences should be available to all children, with federally funded opportunities going first to children of poverty and/or with special needs. The League believes that the federal government should support the following: Early childhood education programs that include funding for parent education and involve child development, health, nutrition and access to other supportive services such as mental health care for all children and their families; Research that documents quality early childhood education programs; and Research that demonstrates the importance of linking state and local community partnerships with effective early childhood education programs and services.