

RE: HB 2166-1 – Preventing suspension and expulsion

Dear Chair Alonso Leon and members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 2166-1 to prevent suspension and expulsion from early care and education programs across Oregon. I am a graduate student at Oregon State University, pursuing a master of public policy, as well as a mother of four children, ages 7-15.

Suspensions and expulsions lead to lost instruction time and a likelihood of continuing a pathway toward academic underachievement, school dropout, and experience in the juvenile justice system.

Another concern is that discipline in school is tied to the juvenile justice system and the school to prison pipeline. Furthermore, students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to have contact with the juvenile justice system in their middle or high school years, especially if they were disciplined multiple times.

When states move to ban or limit suspension of young children, it interrupts a reinforcing cycle of disengagement and punishment for students from groups that have disproportionate rates of suspensions. These changes may prompt schools to find other ways to approach student behavior. Preschools and elementary schools may look to Social Emotional learning approaches when suspension is no longer an option. When laws ban suspension, educators may shift from a punishment mindset to a developmental perspective, understanding practices that foster developmentally appropriate social and school rules.

Early childhood mental health consultation (ECMHC) has been used as one resource to support early childhood education. Research shows that preschool expulsion rates are significantly reduced with ECMHC, including one study where more than three-quarters of preschool age children who were at risk for expulsion were able to stay in their current child care placement.

I urge the passage of HB 2166-1.

Sincerely,
Jeanette Hansen