

Juvenile Services Division Administration

February 2, 2022

Chair Michael Dembrow
Senate Education Committee
900 Court Street SE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I am writing today in support of SB 1522 and proposed amendment language pertaining to the Juvenile Detention Education Program (JDEP) that achieves two important policy changes which would greatly improve a facility's ability to serve its students during and after transitioning from our program.

First, these amendments would ensure that school districts apply credits from JDEP and YCEP facilities, LTCT and the hospital school program as they are assigned. Practically speaking, this means that a math credit in a detention setting translates to a math credit in a traditional school setting. It is important that we do everything we can to keep a student from falling behind while in a detention education setting.

Second, these amendments would clarify that JDEP and YCEP programs may use funds to support students as they transition out of our education programs specifically. The Department of Justice has issued an opinion that the current statute does not allow any funds to be spent on a student when they leave our facility. This creates a support gap that is difficult for the student to manage. While counties do provide some forms of support services, we are currently unable to fund support services directly related to education in this setting because of this statutory barrier. Instead, we have opted to fund some of this work through grant funding with the Bars to Bridges program in partnership with the Multnomah County Education Service District (MESD). This program has been a success, but it is culturally specific and cannot be applied to all.

MESD has been able to serve an average of 150 youth annually through the Bars to Bridges grant funding, many of whom have come through our facility at Donald E. Long (DEL). However, because of constraints on the grant funding, DEL has only been able to serve one third of its population with this grant. If JDEP funds could be spent in this way, we could provide educational transition services to all kids who come through our facility. Additional short term and long-term investments in JDEP and YCEP could in turn fund transition services that have never been available to the majority of our students.

JDEP schools must be funded to set students up for success. This means ensuring that every JDEP classroom has a full-time certified teacher, and additionally academic supports for english language learners, increased access to special education services, educational assistants to provide personalized education to students who need extra supports, transition services to assist youth in successfully connecting to school once they leave detention, and adequate clerical and administrative

supports to effectively operate the school program. We look forward to working with our partners in the coming year to develop a long-term and sustainable funding formula for JDEP and YCEP. As we continue these funding conversations, it is important to make these policy fixes now. They will have a positive impact on students in the short term, and will contribute to an improved system overall as we implement a more sustainable funding model in the long term. I urge your support for SB 1522 and this JDEP amendment language.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deena M. Corso". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Deena Corso

Juvenile Services Division Director

Multnomah County Department of Community Justice