



www.codsn.org

(541) 548-8559

February 8, 2022

Chair Michael Dembrow
Vice-Chair Chuck Thomsen
Members of the House Committee on Education

RE: Support for SB 1578-1

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen and members of the House Committee on Education,

On behalf of **Central Oregon Disability Support Network (CODSN)**, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to **express our support for SB 1578-1**.

CODSN is a Community Parent Resource Center funded by the US Department of Education Office of Special Programs serving families who are navigating Special Education services in 8 rural counties located in Central and Eastern Oregon. We are a peer delivered non-profit organization providing training, support, resource navigation and advocacy for these families.

We are proud to endorse SB 1578-1 for the following reasons:

Students, including medically fragile students needing auxiliary aids and services and nursing, have been entitled to full time in person school since the passage of PL 94-142 in the 1970s. There is no question that access to school isn't an extra or nice to have thing when things are going well— state and federal law mandate that all kids, including those with disabilities, have free full time access to public schools with the accommodations necessary to facilitate that access.

- We receive a significant number of calls regarding students on shortened school days, in alternative placements or sitting at home due to a school's inability to provide the supports needed for these students to receive the Free and Appropriate Public Education they are entitled to.
 - For one family, their daughter was told she could not come to school for the first month while they hired staff to work with her. When she was finally able to attend school, they had only come up with staff for two hours a day and requested that one of the parents

ride the bus with her because they had no bus monitors to fulfill that need.

- There is a large disparity in school district complaint processes, outcomes and remedies when pursuing a Free and Appropriate Education for students with disabilities.
 - For one single father with two students receiving special education services who is a native Spanish speaker, his children are only given access to their education for 2.5 hours a day and due to their schedule was told there are no transportation options for his children. This father who is trying harder than most to support his family had to quit his job to accommodate the school and his children's lack of education by the district. When he inquired about what he could do, he was told by the district he could file a complaint. When he went to the district website, it was only in English with no way for him to figure out how to even file a complaint. Complaints for those who speak English as their first language and are highly educated are hard but for those with any barriers, are next to impossible. Complaints and dispute resolution should not be the only option for parents who want their children to receive the education they are entitled to!
- Parents reporting fear of retaliation if they file a complaint with their local school district.
 - One family in a small rural district whose daughter was only receiving an education for an hour and a half each day due to the school district not having a nurse on staff to be able to provide the needs of her medical protocol. With the family facing the need for dispute resolution options in order for their daughter to receive her education, they pulled her out of school stating that they felt the school and community would retaliate if they filed a complaint. One of the parents had to quit their job and is learning how to homeschool their daughter in the most restrictive placement option due to the circumstances.
- Inequitable education across the board for students receiving special education services during the pandemic.
 - I could tell you story after story of students with disabilities who are not receiving the same access to education as their non-disabled peers and how we as a state are failing some of our most vulnerable students. This must change!

We appreciate the steps made in the -1 amendments because they offer an immediate and timely path forward for families to get their students with disabilities back in the classroom accessing their rights to a Free and Appropriate

Public Education. Of note is that SB 1578-1 will allow the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to immediately investigate allegations of state or federal law violations. If such violations are found, ODE can order the district to cease the actions causing the violations or restore access to instructional time within five school days. SB 1587-1 will ensure the stories I shared today do not repeat for students with disabilities in the future.

In closing, please **vote YES on SB 1578-1**, an essential step toward the true promise of a Free and Appropriate Public Education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input,

Dianna J. Hansen

Dianna J. Hansen, Executive Director
Central Oregon Disability Support Network (CODSN)