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Colt Gill

Director of the Department of Education

SB 821: District Reports on Access to Instruction
Senate Education Committee
February 7, 2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the committee, I am Colt Gill, Director for the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on Senate Bill 821 regarding district reports on access to instruction by district students. At this time, ODE has no position on this bill.

Background

Before we turn to analysis of this particular bill, ODE must first recognize the grounding truth that our system doesn't serve all its students equitably. The agency is fully committed to creating lasting systems change in partnership with the Legislature; we must make real progress for our students, particularly our students experiencing discrimination. By federal law, every student with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Our ultimate goal as an agency is ensuring that every student who interacts with our educational system feels that not only have they received what they are legally entitled to, but they have truly received an inclusive and meaningful education – full of joy, understanding, exploration, and learning. The concept behind this bill moves Oregon closer to this goal.

Opportunities

The bill allows ODE, school boards, the state protection and advocacy system, and the public to obtain further information from annual reports about access to instruction for students experiencing disability. It is an effort that is already underway at the Department.

Additional Considerations

ODE looks forward to continuing to work with the Legislature on the bill. It may be helpful to consider the impacts of the new data collection on students and school districts, especially in light of a new data collection ODE is working to establish that will capture much of the information required in these reports. It will be important in planning, either in the drafting or implementation stages, to ensure that student information remains confidential, especially in Oregon's smaller districts. ODE is also interested in working with the Legislature on implementation timelines.

Respectfully submitted,
Colt Gill
Director