

Submitter: Aine Mines
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB819

I feel compelled to submit testimony on this bill because I am the parent of a child receiving special education (SPED) services. My child is a 1st grader in Portland Public Schools (PPS), loves to read, is fascinated by chess, is a very enthusiastic audience member at University of Portland basketball games, and has autism. He is currently in general education, with the support of a one-on-one paraeducator. We have these supports because kindergarten was extremely rough. We were requested to come pick him up early from school multiple times, including daily one week in November. Once he actually pulled the fire alarm and said he did it because "he wanted to go home and read books where it is quiet." Sending my son home was not a punishment. It was a relief for him because it removed him from a highly stressful, overstimulating environment where he was expected to operate like a non-autistic child, but without any supports to make that possible.

First grade with supports has been far from perfect, and we have still had to pick him up early twice this year. However, it is a marked improvement from kindergarten. No fire alarms have been pulled. School administrators may think they are helping students like my son by informally sending him home early instead of suspending him. They are not. Schools need to track how they are pulling disabled students like my son out of class and shortening their instruction hours. They then need to use this information to get students the supports they are legally entitled to in order to access the free and appropriate education guaranteed them by law.

I hope my testimony will help convince lawmakers that the system as it stands is deeply flawed and needs to be repaired so that all of Oregon's students can receive a quality education and contribute to our community as adults.