

Date: February 22, 2023
To: House Committee on Education
From: William Francis, Programs Director, Community Cycling Center
Re: Support for Flexible School Transportation Funding, HB 3014

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Zach Hudson and Boomer Wright, and members of the committee:

My name is William Francis and I am Programs Director at the Community Cycling Center in Portland, OR, a non-profit with a mission to reduce barriers to access to bicycling and its benefits. At the Cycling Center we offer a variety of mostly bike-focused programming for people of all ages, and in that mix we provide Safe Routes to School support to a number of Title I school communities in the area.

Over the years we have built strong relationships with these school partners and school community members through our after-school bike programming, bike donation events, and facilitation of seasonal Walk n Roll to School days. Our team serves as a glue of sorts that connects school staff, parents and guardians, and other community-based organizations around their common interests of getting children to and from school safely and on time, providing opportunities for increased student physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices, and to facilitate community building.

One example of the potential HB 3014 holds for the communities we work with is reflected in community engagement we did with Spanish-speaking school parents at a low-income apartment housing complex roughly a half mile from César Chávez School in North Portland. While these families walk and bike to school frequently, they do not feel safe doing so due to a lack of street lighting, high crime rates in the area, reckless car drivers, and the verbal harassment they receive en route.

It was frustrating to know that the only option their school could offer was a school bus. Of course they are appreciative of the school bus, but we now know that school buses can be inconsistent. An option such as compensating parents who are already leading informal walking school buses would have been nice to explore with these families. They are the best experts of their own lives, and they, along with all Oregonians, should have sustainable, reliable, and safe transportation options to choose from for getting to and from school..

The Community Cycling Center is an organization that specifically works with Title I school communities, and we can say with confidence that HB 3014 opens the doors for designing and implementing better programming, especially culturally competent programming, that allows us to do our job more effectively.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share our strong support for HB 3014, sincerely,
William Francis