

Testimony of Eric Fruits, Ph.D.
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Before the
Oregon House Committee on Education
March 8, 2023

Support for HB 3068
Award high school diploma if student has passed GED exam

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and committee members:

My name is Eric Fruits. I am the research director at Cascade Policy Institute.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 3068.

I am sure you have read this bill's Preliminary Staff Measure Summary. In particular, the SMS states the federal Every Student Succeeds Act "prohibits states from giving regular high school diplomas to individuals who have earned [a GED]."

This is a mischaracterization of the law.

Nothing in the Every Student Succeeds Act prohibits a state from **awarding** a diploma to a student who passes the GED.

Rather, the law says a state cannot **report** these diplomas as "regular" diplomas for purposes of reporting graduation rates to the federal government.

North Dakota's GED law is similar to this bill, and they have had no problems reporting to the federal government. I had a lengthy conversation with Stan Schauer, North Dakota's Director of Assessment. He told me North Dakota reports both the federally mandated calculation of graduation rate as well as the state's

“completer” rate—which includes people who receive a diploma by passing the GED.

Mr. Schauer noted this is especially useful for Native American schools. In North Dakota, the graduation rate in Native American schools is only 72%, but the completion rate rises to 90% when GED diplomas are included.

My written testimony has a [link](#) to North Dakota’s Every Student Succeeds Act compliance plan and how GED diplomas are reported to the federal government. In particular, the compliance plan states, “A student obtaining their GED is a success story and a step in the right direction for their future.”

Mr. Schauer asked me to invite you to contact him to discuss North Dakota’s program and its success. I have included his contact information in my written testimony (seschauer@nd.gov, 701-328-2260).

HB 3068 is not about satisfying some federal reporting requirement. This bill is about making a meaningful difference to students. What’s the more important number: 72% graduating from Native American schools with a “regular” diploma or 90% successfully completing high school?

Moreover, employers, colleges, and trade schools don’t care if someone has a “regular” diploma, as defined by one paragraph in a 400-page federal law. They want to know if someone has **demonstrated** high-school-level proficiency—and a GED does precisely that.

Committee members, HB 3068 is a step in the right direction that can help many Oregon students write the first chapter of their own success stories. I hope you support it and pass it out of committee.

Thank you.

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