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March 8, 2023

Sen. Mark Meek, Chair
Senate Committee on Finance & Revenue
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 858, Children's Service Districts

Dear Chair Meek, Vice-Chairs Boquist and Findley, and Members of the Committee,

THPRD is the largest special park district in Oregon, spanning 50 square miles and serving about 270,000 residents in and around Beaverton, Oregon. Established over 65 years ago, THPRD's mission is to provide natural areas, high-quality park and recreational facilities, programs, services and natural areas that meet the needs of the diverse communities it serves. We strive to provide all individuals the opportunity to play, learn, and explore, and all employees and volunteers the opportunity to further the district's mission. We do this by removing barriers to participation, fostering an inclusive culture, and offering programs that celebrate the district's diverse population.

THPRD agrees it is critical to increase access to quality out of school time experiences, especially those that are culturally-relevant and culturally-specific, to ensure that all children have the opportunity to not just survive but thrive. However, we do have concerns about the extent to which racial equity was a consideration in the development and advocacy of SB 858 and its predecessors.

Our values as a board are centered in racial equity and, as a board, we want to stand behind legislation that is shaped and guided by BIPOC communities. While we do not see anything in the bill that would preclude an equitable approach to the support of children in our community, specifically children of color, we also do not see anything that requires it. We strongly believe that any efforts to support our community need to be done as a result of listening to the needs expressed by our community. For us, this means a seat at the table from the very beginning of the process for the people who too often aren't invited.

Lastly, we recognize that the creation of a children's service district is done so by the will of the community – 100 electors or 10% of the electors, whichever is greater – but we are unclear to what extent that this will actually engage the BIPOC community and if this mechanism is centered in racial equity. Additionally, the bill states that the children's service district "will select the children's services programs that, after a

competitive process conducted by the district, are to receive funding from the district.” Again, we are unclear if this process will be racially equitable. We would want to look to our friends and neighbors in the BIPOC community for their guidance on how best to do this work. Due to our continued concerns, we cannot support SB 858 this session.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. Please contact Aisha Panas, Deputy General Manager, at a.panas@thprd.org or by phone at 503-816-5804 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Felicita MontebLANCO". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "F" and "M".

Felicita MontebLANCO
President, THPRD Board of Directors