



March 14, 2023

TO: Senate Committee On Education
FROM: Our Children Oregon, The Children's Agenda
RE: Support for SB 575, Students With Disabilities Success Plan

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Member of the Committee

Our Children Oregon (OCO) is a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. The Children's Agenda, convened by OCO, brings together ~127 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2023 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families. **This year, the Students with Disabilities Success Plan (SB 575) is a top priority of the 2023 Children's Agenda.**

Students with disabilities face disproportionate systemic inequities, which have led to the worst outcomes of any student group in our state. Students with disabilities have the lowest graduation rates in Oregon, experience a forty-plus gap in basic reading and math by 8th grade, and continue to be disciplined twice as often as other students. Students with disabilities were already struggling to access education before the pandemic, but COVID-19 and the disruption of in-person learning, created even more barriers and exacerbated inequities. These outcomes underscore the urgency of taking decisive action and targeted strategies for students with disabilities.

Disability overlaps all demographic student groups, including our other student population groups targeted by the Student Success Act and Student Success Plans. However, none of those plans specifically address the particular barriers that students with disabilities face. Nor do they include strategies on how to ensure that students with disabilities within these population groups are intentionally served.

Ableism is the root cause of these inequities among students with disabilities and must be addressed. It is essential to implement policies and practices that promote inclusion, accessibility, and equity for students with disabilities to eliminate systemic barriers. **We urge your support of SB 575 to implement a targeted and comprehensive plan to address the needs of students with disabilities.** SB 575 will:

- Provide professional development on best practices for educators and staff.
- Collect better disaggregated data on placement, diploma acquisition, suspensions, expulsions, and disciplinary rates.
- Prioritize engagement with families and students with disabilities by establishing Special Education Advisory Councils.

We strongly support SB 575 to implement targeted strategies for students with disabilities to ensure their educational success and dismantle ongoing inequities that lead to disproportionate educational outcomes. We thank you for your ongoing efforts to address the needs of students with disabilities, and urge the passage of SB 575 to ensure that *all* Oregon students have the resources they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

Our Children Oregon
 FACT Oregon
 Catholic Community Services
 Children’s Institute
 Clackamas Women’s Services
 Community Action Team, Inc.
 Decoding Dyslexia
 Families First Parent Resource Center
 Friends of Outdoor School
 IRCO
 NAMI Oregon
 Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries
 Oregon AG’s Sexual Assault Task Force
 Oregon CASA Network

Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials
 Oregon Educaiton Association
 Oregon Food Bank
 Oregon Kids Read
 Oregon PTA
 Oregon Primary Care Association
 Oregon Resource Family Alliance
 Oregon School-Based Health Alliance
 Oregon Student Voice
 Prevent Child Abuse Oregon
 SEIU
 Southern Oregon Success
 Urban League of Portland
 Washington County Kids

View the 2023 Children’s Agenda: www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2023-childrens-agenda/