

To Senate Committee on Education
RE: Support for SB 575

Hello, and thank you Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Education Committee. I am very grateful to be with you today.

My name is **Marissa Gleason**. I live in Portland with **my husband, our two sons** who experience disability, and our very energetic Aussie/lab named **Larry**. I work as a **leadership and team development coach** and currently serve as the **Director** of the Global Center for Coaching at Western Seminary where I am also an **adjunct professor of Coaching**. I also serve as Secretary to the Board of Directors of FACT Oregon whom I am proud to be with today.

I'd like to share why I am so passionate about Senate Bill 575, particularly Section 5 discussing implementation of Special Education Advisory Councils.

In the early days of being a parent, I remember the task, like most parents, of just learning who this little **child is with all their strengths and unique challenges**. That was overwhelming at times in light of disabilities. Later on, I was able to learn beyond just my child-- and **more about their specific diagnosis**. My son experiences Autism so you can imagine the overwhelming amounts of information **he** wanted on the subject, much less the information **I needed** around parenting him. Incredible how we parents transform into specialists. Then, once again, further learning took me beyond my child, beyond their specific diagnosis and into the broader advocacy for all children experiencing the wide complexities of **Ableism**.

This is the problem I want to see our schools and communities face down together.

I know that school and district **leadership** cannot always fully understand the unique challenges faced by children experiencing disabilities. I am certain that not all of them are experts on how to dismantle Ableism. And I'm confident that our teachers and staff are working hard and would benefit from as much support as we can offer them. **We can provide that support!** If we open the doors for parents, already learning, already activated like me, to collaborate through Special Education Advisory Councils.

Together we can identify the ache, disrupt the pace and create the space... for All Abilities to thrive.

I want to thank you for your time today and urge you to support our schools by creating these important pathways for meaningful contribution!