

March 14, 2023

Chair Dembrow  
Vice-Chair Weber  
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

**RE: Support of SB 575 – Student Success Plan for Students with Disabilities**

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

**I am a parent of a student receiving special education services and I work at FACT Oregon, where part of my role is to analyze trend data, evaluate programs, and share program impact. I am writing in strong support of SB 575 to establish the Student Success Plan for Students with Disabilities.**

On a personal note, we moved to Oregon when my younger daughter, who has Down syndrome, was 7. From our very first district communication, it was clear that despite three years of success in the general education classroom, her new school team was determined to switch her placement to a self-contained setting. They stressed data points that fed their narrative and underplayed data that contradicted it.

Accommodations and modifications written into my daughter's IEP were not followed. But there was one bright light: a reading specialist with a background in inclusive best practices who recognized my daughter's literacy skills, celebrated her, and used her professional development training to make her classroom a supportive and enriching environment.

Our story only has a happy ending because of teachers along the way who embraced inclusive best practices and decided to invest in our child. With the right supports, my daughter met every goal set for her. She graduated in 2022 with a modified diploma and is now in the community transition program exploring work, transit, and volunteering. Teacher training and attitude IS what made my daughter's progress towards a diploma possible. **Yet, many other kids are denied the same opportunity simply because teachers aren't adequately prepared.**

**I also want to focus on the need for a more complete, granular set of data for students with disabilities. This would help us see important intersections and allocate resources to improve proficiency levels and graduation rates.**

Currently, district and state data is opaque and has poor alignment to outcomes. Here's what we do know (data is from 2021-22):

1. Students with disabilities have one of the lowest 4-year graduation rates of any student group: 14% below the state average.
2. The noncompletion rate is almost double the state average (29% versus 16%)
3. Children with certain disabilities, such as IDD, autism, and orthopedic impairment, are 3-4 times more likely to spend most or all of their day in segregated settings than children with other disabilities. This limits their access to general education core curriculum.
4. A disproportionate number of students from other disadvantaged groups are represented in the special education population.

**Now here's what we can't see clearly:**

1. **We cannot track academic proficiency or graduation rates for students with disabilities at intersections:** for example, by disability type, placement (the classroom settings where students receive services), race, housing insecurity, or English Language Learner status.
2. **We cannot track the impact of restrictive placements on students' opportunity to earn an Oregon or modified diploma.**
3. **We cannot clearly see which kids are in our most restrictive placements. Are they ALSO from other disadvantaged communities?** Some data, and circumstantial evidence from families, suggests this is the case. For example, data shows that extended diplomas and alternate certificates almost always go to students who a) have a disability and b) are multiply disadvantaged. But the data doesn't go into more detail.

**If we hope to improve outcomes for EVERY Oregon student, we need the data that tells us who we're failing. Only then can we identify the real problem and design targeted solutions to address it.**

I urge you to support SB 575.

Amy Geoffroy

Portland, OR