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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB596

SB 596 addresses issues related to TAG data reporting at the state and district level.

The bill concerns two different buckets of data: the first concerning TAG programs and services; the second concerning the learning gains of all students. This bill will not require any additional student assessments. The achievement information is already available.

The first bucket creates district and state TAG report cards that break down the representation of TAG students by income, ethnicity, ELL, and Special education status, compared to the overall population in a district. It also calls for qualitative reports on spending for services, student performance, course taking, FTE and staff credentials, and results of parent surveys "on the adequacy of instruction provided to talented and gifted children,"

The dash -2 amendments update language in some sections of the bill to reflect current terminology and add a section that will report the learning gains of students broken down by ability and subgroup. This follows the recommendation of the JCSS working group and research-based advice. Currently, Oregon collects these data, but does not report it in an accessible fashion.

Reporting on student achievement scores is like measuring the height of students in a classroom—it reflects the entirety of their past but not the adequacy of their current diet. Right now, achievement scores show that students lost ground during COVID but do not reveal how well our schools are helping them recover or whether certain groups of students have been recovering more slowly. To determine whether our interventions are working, we need to measure the change in achievement scores—just as measuring the increases in height would tell us whether students were still eating enough. Data on student learning gains pinpoint areas needing more attention and provide actionable information for policy makers that will benefit all Oregon students.

This bill was in part triggered by the declaration of the State Board of Education that stripped TAG students and high-achieving students out of the portions of the Student Success Act designed for special needs. Ignoring the comments by the Student Success work group concerning the neglect of our TAG students, and the evidence showing major differences in spending and services from one district to another, the Board declared that: "Lack of access to programs for academically gifted and high-achieving students does not constitute facing academic disparities."

This referred to a section of the SSA that lists groups of "underserved" students experiencing disparities who will have separate SSA plans. Several other parts of the SSA and even other laws, and rules reference this section, so when excluding TAG students from this section of the SSA. also left them out from other accountability plans.