

March 2, 2023

Chair, Senator Michael Dembrow  
Vice-Chair, Senator Suzanne Weber  
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

**RE: Opposition to Senate Bill 633**

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

The Arc Oregon is an affiliated chapter of The Arc, the nation's oldest and largest organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). As the state chapter, we represent nine chapters across the state. For 65 years The Arc Oregon has advocated with and for people who experience IDD and their families while also offering innovative programs, services, and training. Our vision is a world in which every person has the opportunity and support they need to become a valued, contributing member of their community.

Oregon is in desperate need of greater investment in special education. Students who access special education<sup>1</sup> are less likely to graduate, more likely to receive disciplinary action, and far more likely to be denied a public education altogether. We need to give schools more funding, teachers better training, and students the education they deserve.

**This investment must be in public school classrooms, however, not in segregated systems.**

Special education students shunted into programs outside of general education classrooms are denied the right to an equal education. It has been almost seventy years since *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided by a unanimous court, a decision that declared that "in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." This is no less true in the case of disability than the case of race.

Historically, special education programs are understaffed and underfunded. Because a minority of students, all from a historically disadvantaged population that still experiences discrimination, are served by them, they are often overlooked by decision-makers. **To separate them completely from the general education system would further marginalize these students. This bill would revert progress that has been made for students with**

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that special education is an extremely broad term. It includes learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, autism, speech and language impairments such as lisping or stuttering, and orthopedic impairment.

**disabilities**, denying them the right to an education at their local school with their peers that generations of activists have fought for. By passing SB 633 Oregon would be saying that segregation based on disability in the educational environment is acceptable.

**SB 633 violates the spirit, if not the letter, of one of this nation's landmark disability justice achievements.** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has guaranteed free and appropriate public education since 1975. It has helped ensure that generations of children with disabilities had the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive alongside their non-disabled peers. IDEA requires that students with disabilities receive education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) possible. An LRE is often a general education classroom and almost always an education in the same building as their peers with the opportunity to interact, make friends, learn from each other, participate in extracurricular activities, and do all the other activities children their age get to. By putting students receiving special education into separate programs, we would rob them of the opportunity to make non-disabled friends. In fact, we may very well be snatching them away from friends they have already made.

Our introduction stated that our vision is a world in which every person has the opportunity and support they need to become a valued, contributing member of their community. Denying children with disabilities the right to education in a general education classroom or, if that is inappropriate, least restrictive environment thwarts that vision. **It is denying them the ability to make friends with a variety of abilities, to join sports teams, to participate fully in the student experience.**

**The Arc Oregon urges you to reject SB 633 as written.**

We understand that an amendment is forthcoming. We are looking forward to reviewing it and offering further input as appropriate.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Sincerely,



Em Braman, Executive Director  
The Arc Oregon