

**Public Testimony in Support of HB 3198**  
**Dave Kline, Superintendent of Colton School District**

Rural Oregon education is not the same as some neighbors along the I-5 corridor. In fact, local control in Oregon is what drives families to reside in small towns across this great state. Students benefit from the small school environment where local staff members can partner with students throughout their educational journey.

In Rural Oregon, the funds are given with a formula and equity is the driver for the state government. The question is: does the equity of funding equal literate, well-rounded students. In order to have well rounded students who thrive, students need caring adults who appreciate and care for their students. Sometimes educators must meet students where they are at each and every day. When students are without caring adults who are driven to see their students learn and grow, we all suffer and schools fall into disarray. This cycle can last for years and then students miss out on learning. The students then have learning gaps that turn into chasms without interventions. When quality intervention systems are not in place, then schools enter into perpetual cycles of school improvement.

School improvement, in conjunction with relationship building, has been made to be more difficult than it has to be. Whether in rural or urban settings, the true unit of change is a classroom that is led by a person who is emotionally sound and finds it necessary to place higher value on character than curriculum. It's more than a notion that modeling expectations, both emotional wellness and sound character, for students is critically important throughout the process of whole child development.

In my experience, the system makes the learning effective with a process that combines high quality curriculum in conjunction with expert-driven, professional learning for staff. Staff need to understand the delivery of the content. Curriculum consistency is critical when looking at early literacy and primary readers. These areas are a tier 1 level of instruction. After the students learn in a whole group setting the students need smaller group instruction. Small group instruction is vital and it thrives with adequate staffing for your primary readers. If the teacher is the only instructor and no other staff options are available, then students get less time and support. This instruction is tier 2 and uses data to track student progress. When progress stalls, then students need a tier 3 instructional support which is usually done in a pull-out setting. Pull-out settings need adequate staffing, which requires more teachers and assistants for learning in an individualized setting, and this is not feasible with current funding for student learning in small districts. In order for early literacy to be the most effective, educators need support staff at the elementary level. Rural education not only needs another funding stream, district's like ours need more staff to support our neediest learners who usually struggle. These students struggle because of poverty, homelessness, trauma, and other barriers. These struggling students lose more learning time and have larger learning losses annually.

I ask our legislature to not only consider funding House Bill 3198 and investing in early literacy, but most importantly, provide more effective funding for our state's rural districts. Rural districts have all the same responsibilities as the larger metro districts, except one major piece. Rural school districts require a few staff members to complete all the state reports, collect all the same data, submit budget reports, smartsheet data collection forms and complete reports on state compliance requirements, but in comparison to the larger districts, they have staffing that are able to focus on these specialty areas.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.  
-Dave Kline, Superintendent of Colton School District