



## **Oregon School Employees Association**

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April 3, 2023

House Committee on Education  
Representative Courtney Neron, Chair

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 3198 Dash Three Amendments

Chair Neron and Members of the House Committee on Education:

On behalf of the over 23,000 members of OSEA in all corners of our great state, in nearly all levels of Oregon public education, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, education service districts, special districts like parks and rec, and community colleges, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the dash three amendments to HB 3198

We support the strategic need to address early childhood learning that emphasizes literacy. OSEA will be fully engaged in the development, as many of our members have decades of experience in early childhood education experiences. We look forward to working on ways to more culturally specific enhancement to existing programs and strengthening It will build infrastructure for this promising now direction that invests in Oregon's future for all our communities' families.

Our early childhood learning members currently provide daily support for children as they build life and literacy skills. They are passionate about educating prekindergarten people, and they find early education both challenging and satisfying. It is important to note that most of Oregon's Head Start Programs are private entities, but there are some early learning programs that are public. Both public and private employees provide support for students and families.

However, we do have concerns about how best to recruit, retain and support the early childhood employees as this particular sector of Oregon's education workforce has a very high rate of turnover. While it is important to have programmatic investments, it is also critically important to invest in quality jobs that include living wages to better ensure higher retention and recruitment. We will also continue to monitor how the state supports public and private partnerships.



That said, OSEA appreciates the direction of HB 3454 that identifies an increased level of transparency, including grant disbursement, annual reporting, and the importance of alignment with existing planning efforts. This new component should connect well with the Student Investment Account (SIA) strategic distribution planning.

The dash three amendments to HB 3198 represent a meaningful state directive that acknowledges the importance of early childhood literacy and its lasting effects throughout the lifetime of education for all Oregon's students. Additionally, we support the legislative intent of the bill which seeks to increase early literacy in prekindergarten students and reduce the academic disparities for key student groups by increasing support to parents and guardians. HB 3198 seeks to develop a full, culturally responsive partnering with public and non-profit entities to increase literacy skills and knowledge development for all families.

Classified employees represent the most diverse component in the professional public education workforce, representing racial, cultural, language, age, and geographic diversity. We more closely reflect the students that we support. This is why we appreciate the clear legislative provisions that expressly support "...Student groups that have historically experienced academic disparities (a) Economically disadvantaged students, as determined under on rules adopted by the State Board of Education; (b) Students from racial or ethnic groups that have historically experienced academic disparities, as determined under rules adopted by the State Board of Education; (c) Students with disabilities; (d) Students who are English language learners; (e) Students who are foster children, as defined in 327.180; (f) Students who are homeless, as determined under rules adopted by the State Board of Education; (g) Students who attend an elementary school that: (A) Is identified for comprehensive support and improvement or for targeted support and improvement under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (P.L. 114-95, 129 Stat. 1802); or (B) Qualifies for assistance under Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; and (h) Any other student groups that have historically experienced academic disparities, as determined by the State Board of Education by rule."

Literacy is a gift that is best shared from generation to generation, from sibling to sibling, friend to friend. Reading provides enrichment and opportunity throughout our lives. The members of OSEA look forward to continuing to partner with the state and stakeholders as we support Oregon's current and future quality of life.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

Sincerely,

Susan Allen  
OSEA Government Relations Specialist