



5/9/23

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Hudson and Wright, members of the committee, thank you for hearing SB 819 today. For the record, my name is Kyndall Mason, and I work for the Oregon Education Association. We represent more than 41,000 educators, classified staff, and specialists in Oregon's public K-12 and Community College systems.

I'd like to start by noting that our members wholeheartedly support all of our students the best they can, and abbreviated school is not the outcome our members want to see for any student. It seems that educators and students alike are caught in the cross hairs of what has been decades of chronic underfunding, specifically in special ed, coupled with lack of oversight and accountability in districts that are using abbreviated school days as a means to an end. It is also no secret that within the crisis that is our education workforce, special ed has suffered acutely from under-resourced classrooms, with a dwindling workforce to choose from.

Current learning environments are not working for our students, or our educators. There are far too many students in many special ed classrooms and a severe lack of expertise at the administrative and state levels to hold schools and districts to account for the decisions to move to abbreviated school against the wishes of families. Senate Bill 819 seeks to restore access to hundreds of students who are not receiving equity in public education, but the bill fails to direct school districts to actually change the environments that lead to abbreviated school days in the first place.

Returning a student to an environment that wasn't right in the first place is a disservice to the student and their family. In addition, without adding additional resources to the educators trying to meet all the needs in their classrooms the outcome will feed the current exodus we are seeing in education, specifically special education.

If we want SB 819 to be successful, we need to wrestle with what that actually means. Every single student deserves to have their needs met in the district they live in. In order to do that, we need to make investments in education that are meaningful. We need more specialized training, recruitment, and meaningful retention plans in order to attract, support and keep educators who we know want nothing more than to make a difference in the lives of kids with disabilities. We need to consider lifting the cap on special ed and we need to advocate for full funding of the State School Fund, which should be no less than \$10.3 billion.

Dialogue coming from districts now includes threats of cuts for the 23/24 school year, which spells disaster for students and families across the state. With so much ground to cover and so many kids who need to be restored to the classroom, we need to fully fund public education.

Kyndall Mason, Public Affairs Consultant, Oregon Education Association