

May 9, 2023

RE: Testimony in support of HB 2609, 2023

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Webber, and members of the committee,

My name is Mark Girod and I serve as Dean of the College of Education at Western Oregon University. I'm here representing Oregon public university teacher preparation programs and as Past President of the Oregon Association for Colleges of Teacher Education.

I'd like to speak in support of HB 2609 to sunset the fees that Teacher Standards and Practices Commission may charge for program approval. The sunset will reduce costs to educator prep programs, reduce costs for students, and allow our programs to invest in bringing more students into the profession. Oregon is facing a shortage of educators – particularly those with the cultural and linguistic assets that match those of our children and families - and streamlining pathways into the profession, including holding down costs, is key to accomplishing the vision of the Student Success Act.

I also serve as a Director with the Educator Advancement Council and the reason I got involved with EAC is the theory of action (if you will) central to the EAC is to improve student outcomes like achievement and graduation, by improving the educator workforce. Research is clear that nothing is more important to student outcomes than the qualities and characteristics of the teachers who interact with our children each day. Without rigorous attention to who is teaching, we just won't achieve our education goals. And these goals predict economic outcomes for our state, incarceration rates, the percentages of Oregonians living in poverty. Strategic attention to building our educator workforce drives many important downstream outcomes in Oregon.

We also know that Oregon has one of the lowest investments rates in our nation when it comes to public university financial support. Our educator programs are trying to do the work Oregon needs us to do but there are only a few ways into the Student Success Act funding except through partnerships with school districts and Education Service Districts. We take this partnership work seriously but developing those relationships, programs, pathways, and supports take dollars to build and taxing us diverts our abilities to do this work. Further, taxing the Oregon programs drives up costs and pushes more educators to predatory out-of-state providers. This is a threat to the rigorous accountability systems we have put in place to assure that Oregon educators are successful like national accreditation and state program and unit-level review.

Please invest in Oregon educator preparation programs. We have open seats in our programs. We want to do the work. Oregon educator preparation programs are a good bet when it comes to educator workforce development. We need the support to play the critical role necessary for Oregon children and families to succeed.

Sincerely,



Mark Girod, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education
Western Oregon University

