



TO: Senate Committee on Education  
FROM: Ben Gurewitz, Disability Rights Oregon  
DATE: February 06, 2024  
RE: **SB 1502 Support**

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chairs Weber, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ben Gurewitz, I am a Public Policy Advocate for Disability Rights Oregon. DRO appreciates SB 1502, and thanks President Wagner for bringing forward this important piece of legislation. SB 1502 will increase access to school boards meetings for school districts, education service districts, community college districts and public universities school districts, for the wider population of parents, students, teachers and members of the public to remain engaged in the regardless of economic, geographic, or mobility barriers.

This bill takes a major step forward in making school board meetings accessible to those with disabilities. Whether it cuts down on barriers due to mobility changes, or for people who need access to support workers to accompany them, or a host of other challenges that may present additional barriers.

DRO would like to reiterate to this committee that even though these meetings are streaming and recorded online, they must remain accessible according to the standards set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act, and section 504 of the Rehabilitation act<sup>1</sup>. This includes ensuring that closed captioning is made available that provides a verbatim account of the proceedings for both live streams and recordings for both live stream and recordings that are made available to the public for later reviews. These services should remain available even if they are not specifically requested by an individual. DRO would also like to remind this committee and school boards in the state of Oregon, that school board meetings must continue to provide reasonable accommodations for all individuals to participate and engage.

In conclusion, we would like to thank President Wagner and the Senate Education Committee for taking this important step to ensure greater access to school board proceedings. SB 1502 will in turn, create a stronger, healthier and more engaged democracy.

### About Disability Rights Oregon

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<sup>1</sup> 42 USC 12101 et seq., the Rehabilitation Act, 29 USC 794.

Since 1977 Disability Rights Oregon has been the State's Protection and Advocacy System.<sup>2</sup> We are authorized by Congress to protect, advocate, and enforce the rights of people with disabilities under the U.S. Constitution and Federal and State laws, investigate abuse and neglect of people with disabilities, and "pursue administrative, legal, and other appropriate remedies".<sup>3</sup> We are also mandated to "educate policymakers" on matters related to people with disabilities.<sup>4</sup>

If you have any questions regarding DRO's position on this legislation, please call Ben Gurewitz at 971-806-7908 or email him at [bgurewitz@droregon.org](mailto:bgurewitz@droregon.org).

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<sup>2</sup> See ORS 192.517.

<sup>3</sup> See 42 U.S.C. § 15041 et seq; 42 U.S.C. § 10801 et seq.

<sup>4</sup> See 42 U.S. Code § 15043(a)(2)(L).