

Submitter: Devon Lawson-McCourt  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB1558

To the Esteemed Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I am writing to express my fervent support for Senate Bill 1558, which thoughtfully amends the existing requirements for abbreviated school days to accommodate students who, either by choice or necessity, do not schedule a class for one or more periods or who engage in certain forms of asynchronous instruction. As a proponent of progressive principles, I believe that education should be accessible, equitable, and flexible to meet the diverse needs and circumstances of all students. SB 1558 represents a significant step toward realizing this vision by recognizing and legitimizing the diverse pathways through which students engage with their education.

Firstly, SB 1558 acknowledges the complex realities faced by many students in Oregon. For some, the need to contribute to their family's income, care for relatives, or manage health issues necessitates a schedule that diverges from the traditional school day. By allowing for these variations, the bill respects the dignity of students' lives outside the classroom and supports their continued engagement with education on terms that are feasible for them. It aligns with progressive values by promoting an education system that adapts to the needs of the working class and marginalized communities, rather than demanding conformity to a rigid structure that privileges a one-size-fits-all approach.

Moreover, SB 1558's provision for asynchronous instruction is particularly commendable. In the digital age, learning can—and should—transcend the physical confines of the classroom and the temporal bounds of the school day. Asynchronous learning offers flexibility, enabling students to learn at their own pace and according to their own schedules. This is crucial for accommodating different learning styles and commitments outside of school, thereby democratizing access to education. It represents a move towards an education system that is not only more inclusive but also more in tune with the 21st-century landscape of digital literacy and remote engagement.

Critically, by formalizing these flexible approaches to education, SB 1558 can help reduce dropout rates and improve educational outcomes. When students are forced to choose between attending school under conditions that are incompatible with their life circumstances and dropping out, too many are pushed towards the latter. By legitimizing alternative pathways, we can keep more students engaged in their education, contributing to a more educated, empowered, and equitable society.

In conclusion, SB 1558 embodies the principle that education should serve the people—all people—by accommodating the myriad ways they live and learn. It is a step towards an education system that values diversity, supports equity, and champions the right to education for all, regardless of one's personal circumstances. I urge you to support this bill, not just as a matter of educational policy, but as a commitment to the broader socialist values of equity, inclusion, and justice for all members of our community.

Sincerely,

Devon Lawson-McCourt

Associated Student Body Business Manager

11th Grade Class Treasurer

McKenzie River Community School