

February 14, 2024

RE: Testimony in support of SB1550 (2024)

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

I'm writing in support of SB1550 (2024) that has the result of consolidating critical functions of Oregon's educator workforce development engine under the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Specifically, my comments are not an indictment of the outstanding people employed by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) or the leadership displayed by the agency that helped Oregon school districts navigate the pandemic. I do believe, however, that TSPC will function more successfully embedded in the broader agency of ODE.

I served six years as a Commissioner with TSPC and am on my sixth year of service as a Rotating Director with the Educator Advancement Council (EAC). I have worked in Oregon education for 30 years and believe deeply in the clear research that demonstrates that effective educators play indelible roles in the lives of students that combat the effects of poverty and inequity. I believe deeply in the "theory of action" that guides EAC which is that we can improve student outcomes by building an effective, diverse, and constantly improving educator workforce. This "educator workforce development" is what I care about most and that I spend enormous energy working to support in Oregon. I am so grateful to the Senate Education Committee for beginning to explore meaningful handles for improving educator workforce development through SB283 (2023) which has led to investments in alternative licensure routes, compensation studies, brought attention to working conditions, and has launched the development of a comprehensive data system. Each of these give me hope.

Our current organizational structure spreads the interests of educator workforce development across multiple state agencies including TSPC, EAC, ODE, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, Early Learning and Care, and other agencies. Educator workforce development is complicated but the distribution of work has kept Oregon from making systematic progress toward assuring that every child has access to an effective educator and that our educators hold the cultural and linguistic assets that our children, families, and communities share. If we hope to assure that every child is able to grow, learn, and succeed we have to consolidate responsibilities and hold ourselves responsible to the hopes and dreams of our children.

If we are successful, student outcomes are connected to so many downstream effects like employment rates, incarceration rates, socioeconomic status, and other basic markers of the success of a society. Thank you for drafting SB1550 and recognizing that attention is needed to build an effective, responsive, ever-improving system for educator workforce development. I am hopeful that the consolidation of roles under ODE continues as it will support Oregon's abilities to build the workforce that will guide our children into an unknown future. These decisions are strategic and they will matter.

Sincerely,



Mark Girod
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