



Oregon

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Dr. Charlene Williams

Director of the Department of Education

SB 223: Honoring Senator Peter Courtney
Senate Education Committee
January 28, 2025

Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Zoe Larmer and I am the Government Relations Director for the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Thank you for the opportunity to share information regarding SB 223. We commend the sponsors for introducing this legislation honoring Senator Peter Courtney, who cared deeply about earthquake safety and protecting our students.

The Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program (SRGP) is a state of Oregon competitive grant program housed within Business Oregon that provides funding for the seismic rehabilitation of critical public buildings, particularly public schools and emergency services facilities. Senator Courtney championed this program, and in 2014, advocated for an increase in the bond funding dedicated to this work for public schools. This has allowed the program to dramatically expand its reach over time; to date, 349 schools have received funds. The SRGP is a part of the Senator's legacy, and SB 223 is a fitting tribute.

We wanted to share additional information regarding fiscal implications for the bill as currently written. Currently, Business Oregon allows the use of Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program (SRGP) funds to purchase a SRGP plaque that is required to be displayed at the schools as a condition of the project closeout. The cost of the bronze plaque most schools elect to purchase is \$850. As noted, 349 schools have received funds. As written in the bill, to go back and give those schools Senator Courtney Memorial Plaques, we estimate it will cost roughly \$323,000 (349 schools multiplied by \$850 per plaque, with an additional \$75 shipping and handling). Going forward, around 20 schools a year receive funds, and it is estimated to cost roughly \$20,000 a year.

There are a few possible considerations that would potentially save the state money if desired:

- The first suggestion is to change the current plaque that schools are required to display as a condition of their Education Seismic Fund disbursement. If the Education Seismic Fund was renamed the Senator Courtney Memorial Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program or similar, then a plaque would not have to be designed and purchased and sent to schools by ODE, as it could be accomplished by a Business Oregon requirement. This would save ODE an estimated \$20,000 per year in plaques and shipping.



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- Another suggestion to reduce the cost would be to have the Senator Courtney Plaque created and distributed to school buildings receiving the Seismic Education Fund disbursements from 2024 (at the time of the Senator's passing) and going forward, not from the inception of schools receiving Education Seismic Distribution in 2009. This would potentially save funds and not duplicate Education Seismic Fund plaques that are currently displayed. The savings estimate would be \$323,000 (349 schools multiplied by \$850 per plaque, with an additional \$75 shipping and handling).

We deeply appreciate the effort to honor Senator Peter Courtney, whose work in the Legislature has made the Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program a success. His championing of this issue has made our schools safer, and we feel immense gratitude for his dedication and his service.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide more information regarding the implementation of SB 223, and please reach out if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Zoe Larmer

Government Relations Director

Oregon Department of Education