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Tina Kotek, Governor



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Dr. Charlene Williams

Director of the Department of Education

HB 2140: Current Service Level
House Education Committee
January 27, 2025

Chair Neron, Vice-Chair McIntire, Vice-Chair Dobson and Members of the Committee, and distinguished guests, my name is Dr. Charlene Williams, and I am the Director of the Oregon Department of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of Oregon House Bill 2140. As an educator, I'm here to highlight why funding matters and why the proposed updates to Oregon's school funding model are essential for our students, our educators, and the future of our state.

Why Funding Matters

Education funding is fundamental to ensuring that every student receives the high-quality instructional experience they deserve. We need to ensure that our professional and caring teachers and staff have the resources they need to support every scholar. From infrastructure and facilities maintenance to providing necessary equipment and technology, funding is the foundation of success. More importantly, it's also about giving our educators the professional learning opportunities they need to be effective in the classroom.

Current Funding Model

Oregon's current model for funding schools was developed over thirty years ago, back in the 1990s. Since then, so much has changed – in our schools, our communities, and in the challenges we face. We've seen pervasive teacher shortages, the lasting impacts of COVID-19, increasing demands on school staff, and persistent district budget shortfalls. These challenges make it clear: we need to update our funding model to meet the needs of today's students and educators.

Understanding Current Service Level (CSL)

As we consider funding for the next biennium, it's crucial to understand the concept of Current Service Level (CSL). CSL is the financial baseline used to determine the necessary funds for operating K-12



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schools. It accounts for inflation, anticipated revenue, and ensures that our schools can function properly. This calculation provides a starting point for the education budget, helping us assess how much we need to adequately fund our schools for the next two years.

Governor Kotek's Leadership

Governor Kotek's leadership in addressing this issue has been instrumental. In the Fall of 2023, she announced plans to review and overhaul Oregon's K-12 education funding model. After extensive consultation with education partners, experts, and researchers, there was clear consensus: our funding model must be updated, and we need a significant increase in funding to better serve our schools, students, and educators.

The Governor has proposed increasing the CSL for the State School Fund by an estimated \$600 million for the 2025-27 biennium. This proposed change isn't just about adding more money—it's about making the process of funding our schools more predictable and accurate. This update will ensure that our districts have the consistent resources they need to operate, avoid budget shortfalls, and prioritize what matters most: the success of our students.

Why This Matters for Our Future

As we look ahead, we must remember that investing in our K-12 schools is investing in Oregon's future. Every child deserves an educational experience that prepares them for success in life. Whether they're ready to learn, ready to earn, or ready to contribute to society, we must equip them with the tools they need to thrive. Funding plays a crucial role in this.

But it's not just about more money. We must pair increased funding with deeper accountability at all levels—districts, schools, and the state. With intentional and predictable funding, we will create an education system that consistently meets the needs of our students, regardless of their background or where they live.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I urge you to support HB 2140. This bill represents a critical step in ensuring that



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Oregon's K-12 education system has the resources it needs to meet the challenges of today and the future. It's an investment in our students and in the long-term success of our state.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to Oregon's children.

Sincerely,

Dr. Charlene Williams

Director