

## Testimony in support of SB 948

Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Weber, members of the Committee, good morning.

I'm writing to strongly support SB 948 from a personal perspective, though I'm a retired educationist and researcher. As a parent and grandparent of both boys and girls ranging from ages 12 to 55, I've experienced their educational journeys up close. Though decades apart and taking place on opposite coasts, they shared a common feature. Both our boys and grandkids benefited from a Montessori education through sixth grade. For those unfamiliar, a Montessori approach engages with learners with the belief that they are capable of being responsible, respectful and capable of interacting with fellow learners and their adult guides civilly. Classrooms are set up with learning centers or areas that children are free to move between as they pursue something they've chosen to learn more about.

Observing a well implemented Montessori classroom, one sees children working singly, in pairs, trios or quartets, purposefully managing their behavior and space. There's no running or shouting and infrequent crying. Indeed, the children, calmly focusing on materials of interest or having quiet discussions, seem happy if not actively joyful. It could even be said they're having fun! Or playing, since it's not what school typically looks like. Further, it's clear that for some, what they're engaged with is hard work. No adult at the front of the room exhorting them to pay attention, closely controlling their conversation or movements. No desks in straight rows, eyes front, everyone on the same sentence at the same time. One description would be self-organizing learning spaces.

Maria Montessori believed in children and their innate curiosity and capacity for learning. She designed situations for low-income children who otherwise might have no advantage. Her approach worked. Sadly, it has evolved here in the US to be an opportunity mostly available to privileged children. America's public education system history was one of socialization and control, preparing most children for work in factories where following rules was prized above imagination. Conformity over creativity, simplified job routines vs collaborative teamwork, etc. All too familiar to anyone who visits a typical classroom today.

SB 948 offers encouragement for approaches that could return classrooms to places of joyful learning, where young children, pursuing clear learning goals and supported by enthusiastic and well-prepared adults, could follow their natural instincts and curiosity to learn about everything; to learn to read and calculate, experiment and discover. Such guided play, informed by the science of learning, could become the norm rather than the exception for all children, not just a privileged few. I urge your support for this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Dr. David P. Crandall  
Portland Oregon