

March 10, 2025

Dear Senate Committee on Education:

I am a school-based Speech-Language Pathologist and parent with two kids in Oregon schools. In 2020, while my children were learning virtually from home, I had an in-depth look at how literacy was actually being taught in our classrooms. I then saw our district and state-wide OSAS scores, which reflected what I was seeing in the classroom. Most parents have no idea about how poorly our schools in Oregon are truly performing, not just in literacy but in all academic areas. Information is not easily accessible and does not allow for healthy debate about what is working and what isn't. If information is routinely hidden or buried, there is no incentive for improvement within the system. What I am seeing as both a parent and an educator is unacceptable.

This bill is a small move toward increasing transparency and accountability; however, moving the needle is going to be dependent on the reports and actions that come from Sections 33 and 35 as well as legislation that requires ODE to follow and *enforce* these rules along with the school districts.

The following are additions/edits that would make this bill stronger.

1. **Greater transparency through posting assessment results, curriculum, district growth targets, and progress, etc. on public online dashboards.**

This allows parents and educators to access all information and promotes healthy competition between schools and districts. For example:

- a. **Section 5** would be strengthened by adding that districts' progress toward growth targets be posted on district websites as well as ODE's website in a format easily accessible.
  - b. **Section 29 (page 49)** has improved with the addition of interim assessments. It is excellent that data collected from interim assessments would be shared at public school board meetings. *\*\*However, these results need to be shared as often as the interim assessments are given (e.g., 2-3 times per year) rather than only once a year. They also need to be posted on district websites and ODE's website in a format in which the information is easily accessible, allows districts and schools to be compared to each other, and encourages districts to pivot quickly when results are poor.*
2. **Timely consequences:** Explicit consequences (e.g., withdrawal of funding?) should be outlined for districts that do not make progress on growth targets. The funds districts receive from taxpayers should not be a "blank check." In Section 5,

it states that school districts can operate without making progress on their growth targets for two years before they even require “coaching.” Districts will actually receive **additional** funding after 3 years of not meeting growth targets according to (4)(b) pages 6-7. After 4 years of not meeting growth targets, the district must let ODE prescribe how up to 25 percent of their funds are used. 4 years is far too long to turn things around for our students. After 4 years can't we say the “coaching” failed?

3. **Strengthen wording in sections 5 and 31 to guarantee enforcement.**

Changing the word “may” to “must” or “will” would be an improvement. For example, in Section 5(3)(b): “In addition to determinations made under paragraph (a) of this subsection, the department ~~may~~**will** establish a procedure for conducting performance audits on a random basis or based on just cause as allowed under rules adopted by the State Board of Education and consistent with ORS 327.141. (6) The department ~~may~~**must** find a school district to be nonstandard if the school district does not comply with the provision prescribed by subsection (4) of this section and ~~may~~**will** impose sanctions authorized under ORS 327.103 or 334.217...).

4. **Hold ODE accountable:** ODE [does not currently enforce their own rules nor do they hold districts accountable when violations occur](#). The entire school system is dependent on the premise that ODE will do its job well, but it historically hasn't. How do we know that will change now? Perhaps a third party needs to review Division 22 Standards, make rules based on the standards that are linked to academic achievement, conduct an audit of ODE, and review ODE's performance annually? Without this piece, this bill falls apart. ODE also needs to be held accountable if the “coaching” provided does not improve school districts. If the “coaching” fails, what then?

Thank you to Oregon leaders who are working to make Oregon schools accountable and transparent. Our children deserve better than what they are currently receiving.

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