

## Testimony for HB 2374 - Establishment of the Parenting Effectiveness Program

Good Morning Chair Hartman, Vice Chair Sharf, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. For the record, my name is Aaron Duff and I am the superintendent of the Milton-Freewater School District, I live in beautiful Milton-Freewater Oregon.

Milton-Freewater is a district of 1400-1500 amazing students. We are one of 11 districts in the state where our students are minority-majority, over 70% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch, and I am happy to say we produce the highest quality students in the state... with a graduation rate above 90%. I am here to talk about one of the ways we are able to grow the highest quality students in the state. I am here to express my strong support for House Bill 2374 and the Dash 2 amendment, which establishes the Parenting Effectiveness Program. I also want to thank Representative Bobby Leavey for bringing this forward.

As a district leader, I am always looking for innovative ways to support both parents and students on their educational journey. One of the most important aspects of this is ensuring that our students are attending school regularly and that there are no barriers to their success. Attendance is not only a key indicator of a student's potential for success in school, but it also serves as a predictor of their future in the workforce. Simply put, if students are not in school, they are not learning, and if they are not learning, they are not prepared to thrive in the workforce or in life.

In Umatilla County, we have been fortunate to work alongside programs like the County CARE program, which provides a wraparound service for families. The current CARE program covers the entire County and is what I would say a pilot program. The CARE

program has been instrumental in helping us address a variety of challenges that some of our families face, especially when it comes to ensuring students attend school regularly. I think one of the important parts of this program is how it serves as a third-party facilitator, helping bridge the gap between schools and families. It can help uncover reasons for absenteeism, make sure parents are receiving the resources they need, and ensure that there are no unmet needs preventing a child from attending school. I have seen firsthand that school attendance affects a true variety of parents and families. This affects everyone and when I have worked with families I often find it has spiraled into something that they don't know how to get out of.

Through our partnership with the CARE program, we have seen firsthand how having a neutral third party can make all the difference. When parents and schools work together directly, it can sometimes be difficult to communicate effectively, especially when emotions are high. A program like CARE offers the benefit of an intermediary who can navigate those conversations in a way that ensures the focus remains on the child's needs and success. This creates a more positive and productive relationship between the school and the family, which ultimately benefits the student.

Attendance is more than just a number. It is directly linked to a student's chances of graduating. In fact, in many instances, we have found that absenteeism is often a symptom of a deeper issue. When we are able to identify those barriers—whether they are transportation challenges, mental health struggles, or family crises—we can then take steps to help families overcome them. The more we can do to remove these barriers, the better our students will do academically and socially.

The Parenting Effectiveness Program proposed in HB 2374 would provide even more support to families and schools by creating a framework for programs like CARE to continue and grow. It will allow

us to expand the resources available to our students and their families and ensure that no one falls through the cracks. It will also help foster the kind of collaboration that is necessary to ensure that all children succeed.

In closing, I strongly support HB 2374 and the dash 2 amendment because it will empower parents and schools to work together more effectively, remove barriers to student attendance, and ultimately set our students up for success, both in school and in life. I believe this program will make a significant difference for students in Milton-Freewater, Umatilla County, and across Oregon.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.