

April 3, 2025
Re: HB2052

Chair Neron and members of the committee-

My name is Amy Fellows and I live in Eugene.

I am very concerned about HB2052 which would fine parents if their children are unable to attend school.

The conversations about “chronic absenteeism” are missing a critical piece and that is school distress and the need for genuine felt safety for our disabled and neurodivergent students. The UK is much further ahead about having nuanced conversations about this as you can see from this article. A quote “Autistic children were 46 times more likely to experience school distress than their neurotypical counterparts.”

<https://researchfeatures.com/children-frontline-neurodivergence-school-distress/>

Our schools are currently failing disabled and especially Autistic students at high rates and pushing them out. Policies such as HB3835 which is loosening what is considered abuse when it comes to restraint and seclusion and making it ok not to inform parents will only make school distress worse for our kids. Currently ODE and districts do not track school push out until High School when “drop out” rates are recorded. I anecdotally in parent support groups no of many, many disabled children being pushed out in elementary school and our Special Education Administrator even refers to it as school “push out”. I am on the Eugene 4J Budget Committee and have brought this up when the district presents about decreasing enrollment. Somehow nobody wants to make the connection about how our special education students are being failed and school is not a safe environment for them.

In fact ODE misappropriated \$3M from SB819 the Shortened School Day bill that was supposed to help protect disabled students from school push out and allow an agreed upon shortened school day for students whose parents requested it for mental health and/or medical reasons.

<https://www.koin.com/news/oregon/oregon-department-of-education-accused-of-mismanaging-3m-wrongful-termination-in-whistleblower-lawsuit/>

It does not have to be this way. There are solutions to make our schools safer for all students.

This is a book on adult co-regulation in the classroom/school that I highly recommend and pass out to educators, EAs, parents and administrators. <https://www.amazon.com/15-Minute-Focus-Regulation-Co-Regulation-Neuroscience/dp/1953945791>

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (which is not positive nor supportive and we’ve been trying for 30 years since the University of Oregon brought it to our schools, clearly is not working no matter how it is rebranded), Applied Behavioral Analysis and Behavior modification approaches that are resulting in a lot of trauma of disabled student push out and school

distress. <https://endseclusion.org/2024/05/18/neurodiversity-behavior-and-the-problem-with-pbis/>

The Trifecta Model for replacing PBIS and other behaviorist approaches in our schools includes these 3 things with suggested resources and national experts:

- Adult/Teacher Co-regulation (not jumping straight to expecting student self-regulation) – see book above and Dr. Lori <https://revelationsineducation.com/>
- Sensory Safe Environments <https://gregsantucci.com/> (we brought to Oregon in August 2024 for the Youth IDD Mental Health Summit and video can be found here <https://iddmhsummit.com/2024-keynote-recordings/>)
- Collaborative Problem Solving <https://livesinthebalance.org/>

I would love to invite everyone concerned about chronic absenteeism to attend the August 6 Youth IDD Mental Health Summit at Oregon State University. This year's keynote speaker is Guy Stephens of the Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint. Our planning committee was inspired by our concerns about HB3835 to ask Guy to travel to Oregon which is in dire need of learning upstream approaches for supporting our intellectually and developmentally disabled youth. <https://iddmhsummit.com>

I urge you to vote NO on HB2052. Our families should not be punished for the failure of our schools.

Thank you,

Amy Fellows, MPH
Eugene, OR