

February 4, 2026

**Re: Written Testimony in Support of Oregon Bill SB 1596**

To whom it may concern:

I write you as a Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Temple University, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and as a global leader in early education.

Children learn best when we teach in the way that human brains learn. They learn when they are actively engaged in meaningful topics, when they are socially interacting with teachers and peers and when they are joyful. These characteristics dovetail completely with Active Playful Learning or what in the bill you call Play-Based Learning. I should add that guided play is a key element of this type of learning that has been well researched. These types of intentional, guided play have a clear learning goal but teach using pedagogies that flexibly support the learning of any curricula.

Since my colleagues and I started to investigate this style of more inclusive and joyful teaching, we find that children grow in academic and social outcomes. Teachers report that they are happier teaching and coaches of those teachers suggest that the classrooms are changing so that learning is more robust and joyful. States like New Hampshire, Oklahoma and Connecticut have already passed legislation supporting play-based learning. In one Connecticut elementary school, the result was more joy and higher scores. In another [study](#) recently published by Dr. Angel Lillard and her colleagues using a national randomized control trial of public Montessori preschools, the authors report better outcomes at a lower cost to districts. Montessori supports a guided play approach to teaching and learning.

Play-based learning particularly those defined as “guided play” or Active Playful Learning are well-define pedagogical approaches that have an evidence base. This approach is gaining momentum internationally as seen in the UNESCO Happy School’s initiative, and movement in early education in countries like Vietnam, France, Australia, England, Romania and many others.

With the introduction of Oregon Bill SB 1596, Oregon joins 9 other states in the US that are re-imagining early education (Pre-K to 4<sup>th</sup> grade) for a time in which AI and globalism are changing the way we must educate our children so that they thrive in school, work, life and beyond.

I am proud to support this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathy A. Hirsh-Pasek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Kathy Hirsh-Pasek

Lefkowitz Faculty Fellow

Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution