

Chair Hudson, Co-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the Committee:

My name is Jessica Cobian and I am here on behalf of Stand for Children Oregon in support of House Bill 4154.

We have a crisis here in Oregon with chronic absenteeism. 33% of our students are chronically absent—which means they miss three weeks or more of school. That is 174,000 children, the size of Eugene. This is the country's third highest rate. And, while the pandemic exacerbated absenteeism around the country, Oregon's position was not different in 2019. We were 3rd highest then too.

Other states that have made significant gains around attendance like Michigan and Rhode Island often start with more accurate and more frequent data. That's exactly what this bill does.

First, on the more accurate data. Oregon currently requires students to be enrolled for 75 days before their attendance counts for reporting purposes, very few states wait this long. Most begin counting much earlier. HB 4154 would start counting at day 10, this aligns with national best practices. Second, on the frequency of data. Currently in Oregon, attendance data statewide is released one time the *following* school year — well after opportunities for timely intervention have passed.

While we know that some school districts share their data and collaborate to find solutions, this is not happening statewide. Publicly releasing data four times a year allows districts across the state to identify trends and find partners in other districts to share ideas with. And it allows parents, communities and advocates to understand the problem and take meaningful action in real time.

In summary, this bill improves accuracy and visibility. By aligning Oregon with national best practice and requiring four times a year public reporting using data the state already collects, HB 4154 strengthens transparency and shared accountability without creating new burdens for schools.

And that transparency matters.

Stand for Children recently partnered with ECONorthwest to better understand how Oregon's very short school year and high rates of chronic absenteeism impact our students' outcomes. The findings are significant. If we cut our rates of chronic absenteeism back to where they were before the pandemic, Oregon would move from bottom to top 15 in literacy. Importantly, this bill was developed in close partnership with COSA, OSBA, and the Oregon Department of Education to ensure it is operationally feasible. HB 4154 will not solve chronic absenteeism on its own. But it is an important first step.

Stand respectfully urges your support.

Thank you for your time and service.

