

Submitter: Simon Fulford

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1572

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I am writing to express our concerns in regards to SB1572. While we all know that our schools and teachers are being overwhelmed by the challenging behaviors of some students, it seems that SB1572 is taking a very blunt approach to an incredibly complex problem. We are certainly not opposed to reforming our education system's approach to classroom discipline, but we would encourage the Oregon State Legislature to do so in a way that helps all students excel. The wording of this bill, as we understand it, could lead to the exclusion from school the very students who may need additional supports and encouragement to succeed.

I have talked to enough teachers in schools that have tried to implement RP to know where these impulses come from: teachers understandably want a lot of control about how they run their room, and that they are the experts in the kinds of disruption that just can't be tolerated, etc. Also that sometimes the administrators bring back a student who has been acting out, saying only, "we had a good restorative conversation", and the teacher has not say in the conditions of their return, or any reason to believe the behavior will change.

In particular, the language "repeatedly interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively" is very vague and could be misinterpreted or poorly applied in the classroom. The likely outcome could be to further exclude struggling students which, in turn, actually causes additional cost burdens to school districts. And lifelong burdens to the pupils themselves.

Yes, we need to empower and support our teachers to be able to run a safe learning environment in their classroom. But our legislation should be crafted in a way that supports teachers, school administrators, children and families to ensure teachers can teach, students can learn and everyone can succeed. A proven methodology is for school districts to adopt highly skilled restorative practitioners and restorative approaches to discipline and to move away from punishment and exclusion models. True accountability for disruptive behavior can be achieved while ensuring children are not excluded from their right to a strong educational foundation.

I would urge the committee to request the bill sponsors take this bill back to a working group and bring it to the floor during a future legislative session.

Thank you.

Simon Fulford