

Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Erika Torralba and I am writing in **opposition to SB 1572**, a bill that will harm the very students our public education system should be most committed to protecting—students with disabilities, neurodivergent students, students of color, students who have experienced trauma, and students from working-class or houseless families.

While this bill claims to address classroom disruption and academic proficiency, in reality it increases exclusion, raises barriers to learning, and creates new pathways for bias, humiliation, and unnecessary removals from the classroom. It does so **without offering the supports, funding, or protections** that all students and educators need to succeed.

1. This bill will disproportionately harm neurodivergent and disabled students.

SB 1572 expands the ability for teachers to immediately remove students for “interfering” with instruction, yet provides **no guardrails** to prevent disability-related behaviors from being punished instead of supported.

For autistic, ADHD, trauma-impacted, or emotionally dysregulated students, what is considered a “disruption” is often a symptom of disability—not defiance. These students already experience disproportionate suspensions, seclusions, restraint, and removals from class. This bill intensifies that harm by requiring teacher consent before a child can return, giving teachers unilateral power over the student’s access to instruction.

This goes directly against **FAPE**, IDEA discipline protections, and the principles of inclusive education.

2. The bill ignores the realities of working-class families and houseless families.

Requiring children to meet new high-stakes academic standards without providing tutoring, literacy interventions, or family resources will punish children simply for being born into poverty.

Families working two or three jobs cannot hire private tutors. Houseless children cannot access stable learning environments. Single parents cannot meet impossible demands placed on them by school systems stretched thin by budget cuts.

SB 1572 raises the bar but refuses to provide the ladder.

3. Retaining students for not meeting standards will increase bullying, social stigma, and dropout rates.

Retention—especially in early grades—is one of the strongest predictors of:

- bullying and social isolation
- declining mental health
- later academic disengagement
- and eventual dropout

The bill does nothing to prevent bullying or protect students who will be singled out, teased, or ostracized for being held back. How will the State of Oregon ensure that children who are retained are not harmed socially, emotionally, or psychologically?

The bill is silent.

4. SB 1572 mandates mental health evaluations after discipline—but provides no access before harm occurs.

Why is a mental health evaluation only required **after** a child has already been removed, singled out, and sometimes publicly shamed?

This reactive approach contradicts every principle of trauma-informed practice. Students need:

- preventative supports
- access to school-based clinicians
- de-escalation strategies
- and early mental health intervention

Not reactive “evaluations” used as a condition of returning to class.

5. This bill imposes unfunded mandates during a historic budget crisis.

Salem-Keizer School District alone faces a **\$23 million budget cut** next year. Districts across the state are already struggling to staff classrooms, maintain reading specialists, hire mental health professionals, and keep class sizes manageable.

SB 1572 requires:

- new review committees
- expanded evaluations
- new proficiency assessments
- new literacy interventions

Yet the bill includes **no guaranteed funding** to implement these requirements safely or effectively.

How will districts that are already cutting staff and programs comply with new mandates? Who will provide the mental health evaluations? Who will staff literacy interventions? Where will funding come from?.

6. This bill will widen racial inequities in discipline and academic outcomes.

Students of color—particularly Black, Latino, and Indigenous students—are already disciplined at higher rates for subjective behaviors like “disruption,” “defiance,” and “interference.” SB 1572 expands the use of these subjective categories.

Similarly, tying grade advancement and graduation to new high-stakes proficiency requirements will disproportionately impact students who have historically been denied equal access to high-quality instruction.

Oregon cannot claim equity while passing bills that worsen these disparities.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to oppose SB 1572.

Oregon’s students deserve safety, dignity, and equitable access to education—not increased exclusion, humiliation, and barriers that fall hardest on the children who already carry the weight of disability, trauma, and poverty.

If we truly want safer classrooms and stronger literacy outcomes, we must invest in:

- mental health supports
- trained staff
- evidence-based interventions
- universal literacy access
- trauma-informed de-escalation
- and smaller class sizes

Not punitive, reactive policies that punish children for needs that adults and systems have failed to meet.

Our children deserve better. Oregon can do better.

Respectfully,
Erika Torralba