

To: Senate Education Committee
From: Dana Hepper
Date: Tuesday, February 10, 2026
Re: SB 1555

Chair Frederick and members of the Committee,

My name is Dana Hepper. I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at the Children's Institute. I am also a Quality Education Commissioner, although I do not speak on behalf of the Commission.

I am neutral on this legislation, although the -5 is an improvement. I wanted to share a few comments for your consideration.

First, as a Quality Education Commissioner, **I share your opinion that it is time to take a fresh, updated approach to establishing the funding needed to reach our state's education goals.** Many on the Commission have been frustrated with the limitations of the existing prototype schools, too narrow of a focus on graduation alone, and inadequate educator input. We can do this important work better.

And **while we can do this work better, I'm not sure this bill meets the mark yet.** One frustration I've had in ~20 years of working in public policy for education and children is that conversations about education goals, funding targets, instructional strategies, spending & distribution, and outcomes & accountability are siloed. These are not separate things – they are, or should be, connected components of a functional education system. This bill does connect funding targets to state goals. However, it does not tackle the distribution formula – which should have been updated in 2019 with the SSA, and could have been updated in 2025 with the CSL refresh. Instead **we have pumped more funding into our schools without addressing equitable**

distribution of funds. If we care about outcomes, we have to connect our funding formula in concert with the other pieces – and not kick it down the road again.

Finally, SB 1555 continues to look at the K-12 piece of the education continuum as a silo. **The opportunity I see by removing this work from ODE is to look at the education continuum – from birth through higher education.** Early learning and preschool supports the goals and outcomes of K-12. And a strong K-12 system should support outcomes in higher education. The entire continuum supports Oregon to thrive. We won't get to a fully funded education continuum overnight, but setting the vision for that system would be a good place to start.

Thank you.