

11 February 2026

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

My name is Scott Smith, and I am the Director of Restorative Justice at Neighbor to Neighbor, the community dispute resolution center serving four Oregon counties. This role has included supporting schools and districts at every age, with behavior supports and strategies that prioritize the social, intellectual and emotional health of every student, including those that struggle at times with disruptive or harmful behavior patterns.

I am writing with strong concerns about SB 1572 as it currently stands. My concerns all relate to the reliance on exclusion as a main tool for addressing problematic behaviors in classrooms, and to the need for more resources in schools. It is well established that as much mainstream inclusion as possible is beneficial for all students, and that exclusion is very detrimental to student learning and social/emotional well-being.

The language that all schools “*Must allow* teachers and administrators to immediately remove from the classroom setting a student who *repeatedly interferes with the teacher’s ability to communicate effectively* with the students in the class or with the ability of the students to learn.” This is extremely broad and subjective as a description of student behavior, and we know from ample research that the more subjective behavioral labels (like “defiance” and “disruption”) tend to be applied inequitably to students of color, students with neurodivergence, and students with disabilities. The language of the bill seems to remove the districts’ and schools’ ability to set other policies or strategies that would empower teachers and students to develop more sustainable, relational (and efficient in the long term) approaches to address classroom behavior.

I fully understand the pressures that teachers are under, and their need to be able to maintain a safe classroom that is also conducive enough for students to learn well. I would fully support bills that provide more support and resourced options for them to address their classroom climate and culture. Teachers and administrators already have and use wide latitude for removing students from a classroom. This bill would codify a specific response with limited utility for a vaguely defined set of behaviors that, as we well know, have complex and varied reasons for showing up in schools.

Another big worry with this bill is the requirement to establish a new placement review committee for many student situations. In principle these committees could be a proper and useful step, but in this current context, where public schools are already struggling to fulfill many other under-funded mandates, and many districts are facing further budget cuts, this extra staff requirement misses the mark.

Existing state and district policies already address student behaviors; this bill is a proposal for state interference at a more granular level than is appropriate or helpful. My assessment is that it comes from a valid impulse to address a real need, but does so with language that will be limiting, counterproductive, and will lead to poorer outcomes for many of our most vulnerable students.

I have less personal experience with the issue of holding back students who cannot read at a certain grade level; again, this is an understandable complaint (“how are students getting into my community college class if they can’t even read at ___ level? Who passed them through?”), but from what I have seen of the research, holding students back provides even worse outcomes overall. So again, I agree we have an area that needs vast improvement, but the solution suggested in this bill is oversimple and likely to punish struggling students without improving anyone’s outcomes.

Thank you very much for your leadership in educational policy and your attention to these points.

Sincerely,

Scott Smith

Director of Restorative Justice

Neighbor to Neighbor, Inc

Serving Marion, Yamhill, Linn and Benton Counties