



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

March 31, 2021

To: [Senate Committee on Education](#)  
Chair, Senator Michael Dembrow  
Vice-Chair, Senator Chuck Thomsen  
Members of the Committee

Re: [SB 747](#) - allows students entering high school beginning with the 2020-2021 school year and continuing through the 2024-2025 school year to take two extra years to complete their high school education. - **SUPPORT**

The LWVUS supports increased educational opportunity for disadvantaged groups beginning at the preschool level and extending through secondary education. The League of Women Voters believes every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.

[SB 747](#) (Gelser) allows students entering high school beginning with the 2020-2021 school year and continuing through the 2024-2025 school year to take two extra years to complete their high school education. COVID-19 and the ensuing move to comprehensive distance learning for students throughout Oregon have led to significant enrollment declines across the state. Senate Bill 747 allows students who may have had difficulties engaging with distance learning two extra years to complete their high school education.

While Covid has impacted many students, those students in special education with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) were especially put at risk for not graduating within usual time frames. Currently, high school students who have special education eligibility may graduate with a regular diploma or a: modified diploma or extended diploma. Other completion options include an alternative certificate or a GED. Those able to earn a regular diploma, may need more time to graduate, having lost most access to education services while isolate during Covid. Those who graduate with a modified diploma or extended diploma, are eligible for transition services through the year of their 21st birthday. These services provide students with intellectual and developmental disabilities critical supports to improve success in adulthood include access to employment, independent transportation and independent living. Due to the pandemic and lack of access to education for those with significant disabilities, some will be forced to choose whether to complete a modified or extended diploma and lose access to transition services or sacrifice their education goals and simply receive a certificate so they can access transition services. This bill would extend access to transition services to their 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday to allow students the ability to complete their education goals with a modified or extended diploma AND still access their transition to adulthood services. The key is that the alternative certificate is not a diploma and deprives students of many benefits in adulthood.

Many mandates under IDEA, including IEPs, have traditionally been referred to as “unfunded mandates” saying that schools “must provide” but not providing adequate funding. We urge the Legislature, Oregon Department of Education, individual School Districts and Education Service Districts to explore the use of Covid federal funds provided under [Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds](#) (ESSER) or other federal funds first before utilizing other sources of state funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this bill.

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