



Oregon School Employees Association

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Senate Committee on Education
Sen. Michael Dembrow, Chair
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the committee:

The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) represents more than 22,000 workers in nearly all levels of public education, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, ESDs and community colleges. OSEA members perform many of the thankless tasks that keep Oregon public schools safe and functional for students, administrators and teachers.

The employees we represent recognize that disciplinary practices are an important aspect to consider as we approach the broad effort to bring racial equity to our schools. Clear and understandable data allows decision-makers to better understand problems and, hopefully, craft the right solutions. It is important to remember, however, that not all data is self-explanatory or even useful when not given in context. In particular, data on an individual school, if presented on a school report card without the benefit of valid comparison points in the district or other parts of the state, would be easy to interpret as affirming one's existing view, regardless of what it actually indicates.

There is no question that the kind of data described in Senate Bill (SB) 328 would be valuable for decision-makers. We must be conscientious to present it in ways that support community conversations about promoting equity. If the data is used to further narratives of "unsafe" schools or schools that are "failing," when we know those terms are used to perpetuate stereotypes about schools with diverse populations and higher numbers of students facing poverty, it may undercut our collective efforts to advance equity in Oregon schools.

Finally, it's important to recall that however the data is presented, it is a function of a variety of factors and the educators working most closely with our students every day are often the least empowered to make positive change for those students. While school staff like campus monitors, who OSEA represents in some school districts, understand well the level of trauma and other challenges facing our students, the understanding that comes with their positions is not matched by authority: They must operate within the policies of their school district and the resources that have been made available.

The reality, I think we would all agree, is that our schools are where they are as a result of years of choices at many levels, and it will take a sustained effort to achieve our shared goals of equity and other improvements. **OSEA looks forward to helping SB 328 be a vehicle to help move that collective agenda forward in a meaningful way.**

Thank you for your attention,

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