

Testimony to Oregon House Education Committee re:HB 3232 and 3233

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The proposed strategic investments in these two bills rest on the incorrect assumption that major "transformation is necessary" because our schools are failing. *But the data show that our schools are not failing. But they are in crisis.* Local citizens have coped with the impacts from a decade of disinvestment in our schools. Thousands of school days have been cut. The curriculum has been seriously reduced. Oregon now has the 3rd highest class size in the nation. We've lost over 7,000 educators in the past two years. A recent national study gave Oregon's education funding effort an "F." This is the crisis we are facing. Yet, in spite of press reports and reformers' claims, Oregon schools' achievement and graduation rates are *still actually near an all time high?* (for details on this, see "Confront Oregon's Public Education Realities to Make Investment Decisions: A State Policy Paper" February 7, 2013 already submitted to Committee members)

Our schools have accomplished continuous improvement in achievement in spite of this decade of disinvestment and the escalating numbers of students who need special help. In 1998, the percentage of Oregon's Hispanic students increased from 8% in 1998 to 20% in 2010. More than 24% of our children under 18 now live in poverty. Numbers of Oregon students in poverty increased 58% between 1997-99 and 2009-10. But, sadly, the recommended investments called for in HB 3232 and HB 3233:

- a) absolutely ignore the school funding crisis and these demographic changes;
- b) use state money to provide grants to a favored few, when these resources should be flowing directly to all our schools, and
- c) will ultimately make our local schools crisis worse because of ever-increasing outside demands from state bureaucrats.

Nowhere in these bills do you see a concentrated investment to remove poverty's barriers to learning by funding coordinated "wrap around" health and welfare services for poor children and their families across all grade levels. Nowhere do you see any proposal to begin reducing the current \$3 billion K-12 funding gap identified by your own Quality Education Commission. Nowhere are there any proposals to reduce class size or restore art, music, p.e. and library and counseling services. These are the *lost opportunities* in our local schools that the proposed investments will impact. You may wish to ask the Governor and OEIB to calculate the specific "lost opportunity" costs that local schools will clearly bear because these strategic investments divert education money to other state bureaucracy ventures.

Next year (2014), you will address whether the OEIB should be "sunsetting." So you may wish to ask the Governor and OEIB for legislative recommendations *now* that will actually reach my 3rd grade great-granddaughter --at least sometime before she leaves middle school! But after three years of tinkering so far, nothing they have done has reached her in any positive way. She's been a first hand observer of crisis—larger class sizes, a dangerously narrowed curriculum, fewer instructional materials, few days for learning. Yet, the OEIB tinkering continues. The Governor himself said last Friday that the hoped-for impact of the strategic investments will likely not be felt in schools for six to ten more years!

Please ask the Governor and OEIB to confront the *realities* of the condition of our public schools, and recommend actual investments that show evidence that they will directly elevate our children's learning. None of the proposals in these two bills will do this

Thank you.
