



Eugene School District 4J
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April 1, 2013

Chair Kotek and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Mary Walston. I'm a member of the Eugene School Board and today I'm speaking on behalf of the Eugene School District.

Our board and superintendent strongly encourage you to support House Bill 3401. We feel it is imperative, when resource constraints for our schools are so great, to do everything we can to spend our education dollars wisely and to provide flexibility for our school districts.

House Bill 3401 will ensure that each school district is able to use public education funds in ways that best meet the needs of their students. If a district is able to purchase high quality, cost-effective services through their regional Education Service District, it will do so. However, if the district has the capacity to provide those services more cost-effectively itself or through another service provider, that should also be allowed and, in fact, encouraged.

School districts are trying to stretch every dollar to make sure our students get the educational services they deserve. House Bill 3401 would allow districts to make sure that education dollars reach our classrooms quickly and are spent where they are most needed.

Times have changed. ESDs, as they are currently configured, have difficulty meeting the diverse needs of their component school districts. Students in large school districts, such as Eugene, do not receive equitable services for the funding allocated to our ESD on behalf of our students. We can no longer afford to ignore this fact.

It's time for a new approach that provides more flexibility and an equitable distribution of resources to better support the needs of Oregon students. House bill 3401 will help ensure that students in large districts as well as small receive equitable services and encourage ESDs to create new service delivery models to respond to school district needs at a reasonable price point.

Although this Legislature has already passed a bill that allows school districts to withdraw from their ESD, we view HB3401 as a better approach. It allows flexibility for school districts to continue to purchase some ESD services without requiring an all-or-nothing contract. During tough economic times, it's essential that school districts have the flexibility make these decisions if we are to put these education dollars to work in our classrooms.

We encourage you to support HB3401 and help school districts efficiently and effectively address the needs of our students and spend our limited public education dollars wisely.