

Testimony Before the House Revenue Committee In Support of HB 2098
Toya Fick – Government Affairs Director, Stand for Children
Thursday, April 11, 2013

Chair Barnhart, Vice-Chairs Bailey and Berger.

For the record, my name is Toya Fick and I am with Stand for Children. I am here today to testify in support of HB 2098.

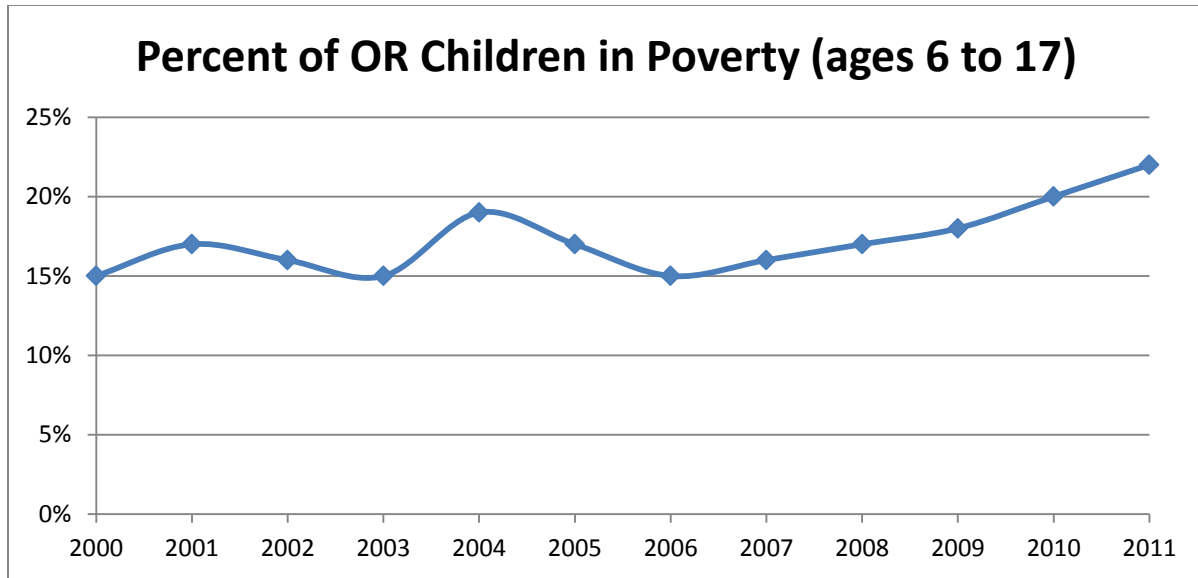
As you have heard, this bill will allow the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to determine the best tool to measure the number of students living in poverty in our state. In short, this bill will make sure all students living in poverty in our state are counted in the state school fund. Doing so is necessary for three important reasons:

- The first is that research has shown that low-income students need extra support and resources to succeed in school;
- Secondly, students who live in poverty tend to move frequently. In many cases, these students move across school district boundaries – making it even more imperative to have an accurate count so resources to support those kids reach the appropriate schools.;
- And lastly, the number of poor kids in our schools has increased since the recession.

Oregon's outdated statute requires ODE to allocate resources in a way that does not adequately or accurately address the needs of students in poverty. Under current law, ODE is unable to capture the number of students currently living in poverty and thus, cannot deploy resources to serve students – all due to the fact that the most recent U.S. Census did not ask about poverty.

Simply put, ODE cannot provide additional resources to the districts for poor students it doesn't know are there.

And we know there are more students living in poverty since the 2000 Census was taken. According to data from Children First for Oregon, the percent of children age 6 to 17 living in poverty in Oregon has risen from 15 percent in 2000 to 22 percent in 2011. That is a difference of 7 percentage points.



All ODE can do right now is adjust for growth in the number of students without increasing the percent of students who may be in poverty. For example, if a district had 3,000 students in the 2001-2002 school year, with 10 percent of those students in poverty and that same district now has 3,500 students, ODE can only assume that 10 percent of those students are in poverty, regardless of how many students actually live in poverty.

This is a static measurement in an ever-changing system.

As the number of students living in poverty rises, we need to be able to ensure all students are counted and that districts have additional resources to serve high-need students. HB 2098 allows the department to do just that.

Thank you and I would be happy to take your questions.