

TESTIMONY TO LEGISLATURE 5/14/13

GOOD MORNING LADIES AND GENTLEMAN, CHAIR . THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO TESTIFY THIS MORNING ON BEHALF OF HB 3233.

MY NAME IS KAREN FISCHER GRAY AND I AM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE PARKROSE SCHOOL DISTRICT IN PORTLAND, OREGON. I AM ALSO A PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSIONER WITH THE CITY OF PORTLAND.

MY SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS A RICHLY DIVERSE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC. FORTY PERCENT OF OUR STUDENTS ARE WHITE AND 60% ARE STUDENTS OF COLOR. OUR DISTRICT HAS 72% STUDENTS OF POVERTY AS MEASURED BY FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH RATES. OUR DISTRICT HAS 25% ELL STUDENTS SPEAKING MORE 50 DIFFERENT LANGUAGES AND GROWING.

This winter and spring, I had the honor of helping to design the new Oregon English Learner Plan along with a wonderful group of superintendents and educational practitioners. Recently, this well design plan was presented to the OEIB Best Practices group with a very warm reception and is now at ODE with David Bautista, the educator in Oregon designated to implement a state wide educational plan for students whose first language is not English. This EL student population is growing in Oregon and makes up a large portion of the student population in Multnomah County. They are also, unfortunately, part of a large portion of students who are typically underserved by our school districts and many are dropping out. It is on their behalf that I am with you all today.

The following are reasons why I hope that you will support the passage of HB 3233:

HB 3233 includes recommendations of significant funding to support the EL Strategic Plan specifically to:

- Increase leadership at the state level in order to provide support for districts to guide the development, improvement, and accountability for traditionally underserved populations
- Assist districts in collecting and using culturally specific input from parents and the community about how they can best contribute to the success of historically underserved students
- Identify and use effective instructional practices associated with research based programs for underserved students. Provide districts with opportunities to learn about and replicate effective models and practices
- Develop tools and resources to support implementation, benchmarking and continuous improvement of instructional programs for identified student populations
- Provide training for educators on the implementation of a new statewide assessment for English Learners
- Incorporate more culturally responsive training into educator preparation curriculum.
- To provide funding to develop dual-language immersion preparation programs.

It also provides a way for the existing workforce to have access to EL endorsement offerings.

This list contains many aspects of the newly created English Learner Strategic Plan. So that is where we need your help. Please pass HB 3233. It is going to make a huge difference in the lives of Oregon kids and families.