

Kristen's testimony to Senate

Chair Hass, Vice-Chair Knopp, members of the Senate Committee on Education and Workforce Development,

My name is Kristen Kohnstamm, and I am a school board member with the Riverdale School District, and a parent of two students, a high school senior and a high school freshman. I am here to urge you to oppose House Bill 2747 which prohibits receiving districts from requesting any information about transfer students beyond name, age and grade level.

In the words of the legal counsel to Lake Oswego, Riverdale, and dozens of other school districts in this state, House Bill 2747 "will effectively kill the inter-district transfer process that has existed for a long time between districts. The mere fact that districts will know nothing about the extra expenditures that might be created by those incoming students or the disciplinary history of the students will make them not worth the risk." As a result, districts around this state will shut down their borders and eliminate any options for parents seeking a different environment for their kids.

The bill does this by prohibiting a receiving district from asking any questions of the incoming student (only name, grade and age). The receiving district may not ask for transcripts, school grades, suspension or expulsion history, criminal records, or require a student to visit its school or program. This puts my Superintendent in a bad position in terms of sussing out and meeting student requirements and it actually harms the student by eliminating the important conversation between the receiving school and the prospective student about "is this school a good fit for you?" This bill also prohibits any contracts or any time limits on student transfers, as the student becomes a "resident" student in the receiving district.

This bill will impact the Open Enrollment law enacted in 2011. It further reduces the information and control over transfers for the receiving district. With the original open enrollment law, a district was able to accept students from a specific geographic area. With HB 2747, that ability is taken away for all transfers, including open enrollment. As a result, we may see open enrollment continue to wither as well.

During a time of great challenge for Oregon schools, when changes are being discussed for Open Enrollment, when school funding is uncertain due to PERS, this piecemeal bill adds additional uncertainty for school boards across the state. For this and all of the reasons I have mentioned, I urge you to oppose HB 2747.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you and thank you for your generous public service to our state and to our school kids.

Kristen Kohnstamm
430 SW Iron Mountain Blvd
Portland, OR 97219