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To: House Committee on Education, 2013 Oregon Legislature

From: Dr. Brian Megert, D.Ed., Special Programs Director, Springfield School District

Date: March 1, 2013

Re: Support for HB 2192

In Springfield School District #19 (SPS), we are in favor of H.B. 2192 regarding school discipline. SPS favors the use of prevention and intervention efforts in the area of discipline at the district, school, classroom, and individual student level. Additionally, the implied *teaming* aspect of the policies associated with individual student discipline is the most important portion of the proposed legislation. Also, requirements for reporting to parents in a timely manner is an important aspect of school disciplinary actions. Finally, allowing for discretion when issues consequences associated with weapon possession is a very important aspect of the proposed law.

Prevention and intervention: For many years the Springfield School District has implemented school wide positive behavioral supports throughout the district. *We strive to maintain a positive school culture and treat incidents of misbehavior as teachable moments.* We attempt to teach students desired behaviors during the beginning of the school year, in all the settings where students spend their school day. School staff members have methods of acknowledging and rewarding desired behaviors. They also have graduated approaches for providing consequences for misbehavior, which includes a method for teaching the desired behaviors. These school-wide behavioral supports are research-based and should be implemented statewide.

Use of teaming: Section 4(a)(A) through (L) provide opportunities for teams made up of teachers, counselors, school psychologists, administrators, and parents to use evidence-based problem-solving strategies rather than reactive, less effective strategies when issuing consequences for possession of weapons and/or threats of violence. This is an approach that Springfield School District has employed and refined over the last two years. *We believe that teams of people who are in contact with students every day have the capacity to accurately assess a level threat and appropriately plan for next steps.* Many times the next steps that teams take are comprehensive and utilize services from outside agencies. This approach provides an opportunity for immediate, strategic planning for students who are at-risk and drastically reduces the amount of time that underserved populations spend out of school.

Communication with family: In Springfield School District we know that connection with the family is the only way to have strong, long-term effects on student achievement. This is especially true when students struggle with behavioral concerns and academic deficits. Adding a level of requirement at the state level to ensure that parents are reported to and part of the disciplinary process will assist with using appropriate behavioral supports.

Discretion when issuing consequences: There are multiple scenarios when students bring items to school that could be considered weapons. In Springfield teams of qualified personnel attempt to determine the student's motivation for bringing these items to school prior to deciding further action. Teams take time to establish the motivations because actions should take the student's perspective into consideration. For example, the student could feel victimized and bring a weapon as self-defense. The school should not simply suspend, expel, or otherwise exclude a student because they were reacting to threatening behavior from another student. Schools need to plan for potential victims and take actions that will protect all students and staff involved. In other cases, a student might bring a weapon or make threats in order to menace another student or staff member. In these cases, simply excluding the student from school may be counter-productive. Excluding, without more comprehensive planning, will provide time for the student to become more angry or marginalized and have more time to plan for violent acts. We believe that consequences are necessary when students misbehave, but legislation that provides a level of flexibility is necessary in order to take strategic and appropriate actions.

Finally, we also want to make sure that we do not discipline students harshly when they simply make mistakes by bringing items to school that they should not – particularly when younger students lack understanding as to why an item may be dangerous in the school environment. We would miss an important teachable moment by simply excluding such students.

House Bill 2192 contains policies that will promote promising practices associated with school wide discipline and behavioral supports. Springfield School District is in favor of passing this bill.