



BEFORE THE: House Education Committee
REGARDING: House Bill 2538 - Support
BY: Betsy Miller-Jones, Executive Director
DATE: 3-15-13

Chair Gelser and members of the House Education Committee, for the record, my name is Betsy Miller-Jones and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon School Boards Association. I am here today to ask for your support for House Bill 2538, which would ensure that 1400 locally elected school board members have a seat at the table *and* a vote on the deliberations of the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB).

Background

With the creation of the OEIB, Oregon has taken major steps towards an integrated system of education from birth through college. I will admit that many of our members were skeptical of the OEIB concept and the 40-40-20 goals. Too many of them have lived through other major education reforms like CIM-CAM and NCLB and were rightly concerned that this was just another education fad that would fail to take hold for lack of funding or political will.

That viewpoint has changed over the past 18 months. I would say that many of our members are now cautiously optimistic that Oregon's education system is on the right track at the state level. They see a Governor and Legislature that understand the financial crisis in our schools and how this has decimated our ability to provide the best education for our students. Our members have been impressed with Dr. Crew's willingness to engage our organization and meet with our members. Rob Saxton has reinvigorated the work of the Department of Education. There is reason for optimism.

OEIB Structure

Currently, the OEIB is made up of 12 members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The current board includes members who are teachers, superintendents, union leaders, business leaders, professors, academics and representatives of social service non-profits. It is a diverse and well qualified body.

The OEIB has included school board members on advisory committees and have sought out our input at key decision points on achievement compacts and other issues of critical importance. In short, OSBA and school board members enjoy a positive and productive working relationship with the OEIB, Dr. Crew and his staff.

But being able to come to the table and share your thoughts, opinions and concerns is *not* the same as having a seat at the table and a vote. Right now there is a glaring omission from the board. The voice and vote of an integral education stakeholder group is not at the table. The OEIB does not include a member who serves on a locally elected school board.

Ensuring School Board Members Are Represented

House Bill 2538 proposes adding one additional board position to the OEIB and ensuring that space is filled by a member of a school board.

Oregon's K-12 public education system is the single largest item in the state budget and the largest entity under the authority of the OEIB. Currently, achievement compacts are the most important area of work under the direction and control of OEIB. These compacts are between the state of Oregon and the locally elected school board; it is the school board that is responsible to set and approve the final goals in the achievement compact.

It is the school board that is ultimately responsible for student achievement in a given district. It is the school board that is ultimately responsible to the state and federal government for improving student outcomes. And it is the school board that is ultimately responsible to their local voters and constituents to make sure Oregon's public school students are prepared to be productive citizens.

That is why school board members across Oregon are asking you to make sure that they are represented at the table as a full voting member and partner on the Oregon Education Investment Board. Their insights and perspectives about how education policy plays out on the ground in local school districts are essential in the debate about how to reach our shared 40-40-20 goal by 2025.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.