

Dear Chair Gesler and distinguished members of the House Education Committee:

HB 2500 would give flexibility to Oregon school districts to decide how to spend their valuable transportation dollars. School Districts could innovate to meet the needs of families in their geographically diverse urban and rural districts. Yellow school buses might make the most sense for the health, safety, and efficiency of some locales, while active transportation initiatives might be a better fit for others.

Innovation and choice is exactly what a student like Daisy [REDACTED] needs. Daisy was an overweight 5th grader at Elk Meadow Elementary, a low-income school in Bend. She lacked self-confidence and had recently been diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. In January 2012, her doctor encouraged her to make considerable life changes; she needed to exercise and make better food choices.

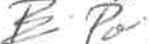
Soon after receiving her prescription for lifestyle change, Daisy learned that her class would take part in a 10 mile Bessie Butte bike trip in May. She owned a bicycle, but she struggled with the basics of riding and knew that she was not ready for such a trip. Motivated by a new goal, she started riding around her home and 4 miles on weekends. She started losing weight. Biking became her inspiration.

Daisy's morbidly obese mother had also been diagnosed with diabetes. They went on a journey to better health together. Daisy's motivated spirit inspired her mother to make changes, too. By June 2012 the Bessie Butte ride day arrived, Daisy had achieved her weight loss goal: she shed over 20 pounds. She no longer showed symptoms of diabetes and her self-confidence had dramatically improved. Now in middle school, Daisy continues to stay in shape by bicycling to school.

Daisy's 5th grade teacher, Allison Gardner explains, "We have so many kids that limit themselves physically and they limit their potential; it scares these kids. We tell them, 'You're going to hike Bessie Butte and bike 10 miles. They don't believe it, but then they ask it of themselves and then they do it.'"

Many of these kids want the choice walk and bike to school, but it is not entirely up to them. What if their school district had had the freedom to spend their transportation dollars on walking and biking school buses instead of just on yellow busses? What if they had started walking or biking to school with their community in kindergarten? Could we prevent some of the chronic conditions plaguing our youth today? Please support this bill to allow school districts the choice in how to best spend their transportation dollars in their own communities.

Sincerely,



Brian Potwin

Commute Options

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