

Kate Grandusky Testimony in Favor of HB 4141
Att. Committee Staffers of Ben Unger - Edward and Paul

I am here to support Ben Unger's Bill 4141 creating "Lock Box" for education allocated dollars which should be attractive to fiscal conservatives, republicans and democrats alike because education dollars are our most important tax dollar investment.

We are all aware the 21st Century has been challenging with two wars, recession, high unemployment, and the swelling of the numbers of individuals in poverty. The children of Oregon have also been significantly impacted by these challenges. Our teachers and communities have continued through these difficult years with a firm commitment to put in more time and commitment to our next generation of learners with less dollars, teachers, and resources.

While we continue to hear the steady drumbeat of negative journalism and criticism from the new Reformers about the failure of public schools I have to wonder if they have been in the classrooms working with children and actually looking at the longitudinal data from the last sixty years. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), a non-stakes federal test, are at an all time high for students who are white, black, Hispanic, and Asian. Graduation rates are also at an all time high. More young people than ever are entering college. Even more would go to college if the costs were not so high.

Diane Ravitch states in her book *Reign of Error*, "...of course, some schools and districts have very low test scores and low graduation rates, and this has been always true. Most of these schools and districts have two factors in common...poverty and high concentration of minorities. The combination of these two factors is associated with low tests scores. Children whose parents are poor and have low educational attainment tend to have lower test scores. Children who are poor receive less medical attention and less nutrition and experience more stress, disruption, and crises in their lives. These factors have an ongoing and profound effect on academic performance. That is why poor children need even more stability, more support, smaller class sizes and more attention from their teachers and others in their schools, but often receive far less, due to under funding."

In Oregon, our public schools have been badly under funded and regularly pummeled by budget cuts, rising class sizes, and damaging mandates that have undermined their mission. The inevitable result of such segregation and under funding is low academic performance which is then blamed on schools. The failure of public policy is not the failure of public schools. It is the failure of all of us....legislators, businesses, and state/federal governments that continue to make unfunded mandates.

If we take seriously the charge to improve education we must not only permanently fund the schools but improve the schools and social conditions for children and families. To reduce the achievement gap, we must reduce the opportunity gap. We must invest in early childhood education and make sure that all children have the medical care they need.

If we mean to lift the quality of education, we should insist that all children have a full

curriculum, including history, civics, literature, foreign languages, physical education, mathematics, science, and usage of school libraries. We should make sure that every child has the chance to sing, dance, write, act, play instruments, sculpt, design, and build. Students need a reason to come to school, not as duty, but for the joy that comes from performance and imagination.

If we truly care about the welfare of the most vulnerable children in our society, we will turn our efforts to reducing economic inequality and poverty. These are the root causes of poor academic performance. We must lower the child poverty rate. It should be a national scandal. It's time to get to work on policies and programs that address root causes.

I support HB 4141 to provide permanent and consistent funding for the future of our children. If we do not do so, our schools and teachers are not the failures, but it is all of us in this room and others in our state who do not put our children's future as a number one priority.