

Senate Committee on Education

Testimony of Dr. Rex Hagans on SB 215 regarding removing sunset on Oregon Education Investment Board

Chair Roblan, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Rex Hagans. I live in the Canby School District and am a Founder of Oregon Save Our Schools. I spent 30 years working in Educational Research and Development, most of them devoted directly to leading large-scale efforts to improve public schools. I have also been a very close student of the OEIB from its very beginning, attending the majority of the Board's meetings and interviewing many of its staff and leaders.

Based on that background and experience, I am here today to urge you to reject SB 215 and let the Oregon Education Investment Board sunset.

There are many good reasons why I believe that is your best course of action. Among them are:

Oregon's Teachers are insulted and angered by the approach and processes of the OEIB.

Our teachers believe that the educational "wisdom" of policy analysts, politicians, advocacy groups and big business leaders which dominate the OEIB has essentially sneered at and ignored their own professional and craft knowledge. This is especially evident in the dogged determination of the OEIB to continue and even extend the use of tests which teachers feel harm their students.

This is hardly a good omen for the ultimate goal of improving our schools.

The "tone" of the OEIB's work is eroding public trust

The appearance of arrogance and impropriety is a continuing aspect of the work of the OEIB and it is fed by a lack of transparency.

Examples include:

1. Decisions made in **closed** or even "secret" meetings prior to the creation of the Board
2. Excessive **pressure** for "speedy" decisions about very complex and controversial problems were designed to limit the expression of concerns and disagreement
3. Consistent **reliance** on a very small set of "experts" and failure to seek input from others questioning the approach reeks of pre-determined decision making
4. Parents, teachers and community members seriously questioning the approach have been virtually **excluded** from any meaningful input
5. The lack of attention and "**spin**" given to the real messages received at the seven regional "forums" makes it apparent that their purpose was never input.
6. The extremely close "**match**" between certain initiatives chosen for competitive funding and existing programs designed and/or led by members of the Board and/or newly appointed officials in the ODOE has not gone unnoticed.

The OEIB's approach to strategic investment is poorly conceived and exerting pressure on restoring solid basic funding levels for our schools.

H. L. Mencken famously said: "For every complex problem, there is a n answer that is clear, simple and wrong."

I believe this is not an unfair generalization to apply to the plans OEIB has put forth for their strategic investments. I have no quarrel with the quality of most of the programs selected for "investment", but I have seen absolutely nothing to convince me that they have adequately addressed the challenges and costs of "going to scale", and moving a successful program from its initial home to other schools and districts. Having spent 30 ears working at essentially that very task, I fear they may well be setting a course for the rocks of disappointment and disillusionment. Not to mention one that is very likely to bring them back to you in the out years for more and more funding. And that could lead to the pressure between "strategic" funding and "bread and butter" funding becoming an ongoing staple of legislative budgeting for years to come.

Again, I urge you to let the Oregon Education Board ride into the sunset.

Thank you for listening.

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