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Testimony in Support of Oregon House Bill 2650:

Relating to Summer Education Programs; and Declaring an Emergency

Sarah Pitcock
Chief Executive Officer
National Summer Learning Association

February 17, 2015

On behalf of the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) and our thousands of members across the nation, including Oregon, I urge passage of Oregon House Bill 2650, directing the State Library to distribute grants to school districts for early reading programs provided during the summer.

NSLA is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. Our work is driven by the belief that all children and youth deserve high-quality summer learning experiences that will help them succeed in college, career, and life. Our mission is to convince, connect, and equip providers, education leaders, families, and communities to deliver high-quality summer learning opportunities to our nation's children and youth that help close the achievement gap and support healthy development.

For more than 20 years, we have built a field around this issue, recognizing and disseminating what works, offering expertise and support for programs and communities, convening leaders, and advocating for summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education.

The research on summer learning loss is solid.

- Every summer, low-income youth lose two to three months in reading achievement while their higher-income peers make slight gains. Most youth also lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in math skills in the summer. Year after year, these losses add up.
- By the end of third grade, four out of five low-income students fail to read proficiently, making them four times more likely to drop out of high school. By fifth grade, cumulative years of summer learning loss can leave low-income students 2.5 to 3 years behind their peers.
- Risk for childhood obesity increases during the summer months. Students without regular access to nutritious meals are at greatest risk.

A recent report by ReadyNation, the nation's preeminent business leader organization—under the umbrella of the Council for a Strong America—with 1,100 members working to strengthen business through effective policies for children and youth, cites the data on summer learning loss for low-income youth. The report finds that “the U.S. spends an average of \$10,608 per student each year, or \$2,122 for two months. With 10.1 million students in poverty nationwide, \$21 billion in education spending is lost over [the two months of] the summer.” The corresponding per student loss for Oregon is estimated at \$1,937.

House Bill 2650 will provide resources to local school districts and partners in their communities to keep school libraries open during the summer with programs encouraging reading, providing nutritious meals, and expanding learning for those young people most in need of such opportunities.

NSLA enthusiastically endorses House Bill 2650.