

House Committee On Education

HB 2801

Judy Strand Testimony

Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee:

My name is Judy Strand. I am a licensed clinical social worker, who has been an Oregon resident since 1983. I have focused my career on underserved communities and issues that are complicated to solve. In doing so, I have found that there are sometimes logical solutions that make the biggest difference in the long run. This bill simply uses a known and proven model to add capacity to address the huge need of almost 1/3 of our state's children- literacy by the end of 3rd grade.

The proposed bill harnesses the capacity of a large demographic of older adults to advance childhood literacy through a proven approach. For over 20 years, the organization I currently lead – Metropolitan Family Service (MFS) has operated a national model called Experience Corps – an intergenerational mentoring program that is evidence based for 3rd grade reading. Oregon was one of the first pilots for this model. Our reach in Oregon is limited to funds our nonprofit can raise. As such, we have been able to support 10 mentor teams in 10 high need schools serving 250 children. Our results show 69% substantial literacy gains towards grade level reading through 1:1 work and small groups in classrooms. The children served typically face challenges due to poverty, learning needs and language barriers. In order to reach those gains, we provide specific training, support – and collaboration with schools is key.

HB 2801 opens up an avenue for other communities to build intergenerational teams in high need schools, while potentially helping sustain what is working in our community.

Through the course of my 30 year of professional work experience, I have witnessed older volunteers creating changes that no younger professional can accomplish. Some of the descriptors we see in studies of volunteer and paid older workforce include: creativity, reliability, high problem solving capacity and the ability to stay calm in the face of crisis or challenge. We also know that the baby boomers still want to change the world, and they are stepping up into second careers and volunteer roles to do just that.

This bill offers a way to channel an enormous capacity for the compassion and work ethic of those who are 50+ to be put into service for our young ones.

In my role as Chair of the Governor's Commission on Senior Services, we have determined that we are going to dedicate a portion of our efforts to the Assets of Aging – the Commission has endorsed HB 2801. Two national organizations have offered their expression of support on this bill – the national Experience Corps office and the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities.

I hope you will consider this bill further so that children across Oregon can have a greater chance to succeed, and I am happy to provide additional information to you as requested.

Judy Strand, LCSW

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judy Strand".

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