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**House Committee on Education
Testimony of Tobi Rates on HB 2673**

Chair Doherty and members of the Committee:

My name is Tobi Rates, and I reside at 8306 NE Thompson St, Portland, OR 97220. I am here in my capacity as the Executive Director of the Autism Society of Oregon and the mother of 2 children on the autism spectrum who receive special education services.

The Autism Society of Oregon is the state's largest autism group and the only one that operates state-wide. We represent everyone affected by autism, both individuals on the autism spectrum and their families, across the autism spectrum and throughout the life span. Our mission is to empower these individuals to improve the quality of their lives through resources, education, advocacy and support. Over 5,600 people access ASO as a resource and participate in ASO activities, in all regions of the state.

I am here in support of HB 2673 which would promote better communication between schools and families, provide more information on available special education services to families and decrease the time that children have to wait to access special education services.

Specifically, HB 2673 would require school districts to provide families with an annual summary of special education services provided to students during the previous year. This review would provide information to many families who are unaware of services that are available and which would benefit their child, if they knew to ask for them. These families are not asking for additional services, but for the services that are currently available. It is untenable that the families who have the means to afford legal representation are able to advocate for services that lower income families aren't even aware exist. This disparity in access to services only serves to increase the disparity in outcomes for children with special needs.

HB 2673 would also increase information to families about available services by disallowing confidential agreements between school districts and families who have successfully sued to obtain special education services for their child. These confidentiality agreements are often a standard part of a settlement agreement. By preventing families from sharing information with

other parents about the accommodations or services they have received, the inequities between otherwise similarly situated students are increased. Confidentiality in monetary or compensatory awards would still be retained.

HB2673 also aligns Oregon law with the national standard on timing for an initial evaluation or reevaluation at 60 calendar days, rather than 60 school days. Under the current 60 school day provision, a family that requests an initial evaluation for an IEP on the first day of school would not be required to receive the completed evaluation until Dec 4th. Practically speaking, even if the child is eligible, he or she would not receive special education services until after the school year resumes in January. These are services that the child needs to be success in school. Completing these evaluations in 60 calendar days would result in services being available to the children who need them in a much more timely manner.

Again, we urge the passage of HB 2673.

Thank you.