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**House Committee on Education – HB 2597
Testimony of Tobi Rates**

Dear 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, Board member of the Portland Asperger's Network, and the mother of 2 children on the autism spectrum.

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, including individuals on the autism spectrum, their families and their care providers. Our mission is to empower these individuals to improve the quality of their lives through support and information. 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 2597 which will allow a determination of whether the absence from school of a child with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a manifestation of that disability and thus an excused absence. Currently, the school has the discretion to determine if an absence is excused or not. Too many unexcused absences result in a truancy action against the parents. . This bill would allow families to argue that the absence is not unexcused and should not result in a truancy action.

Autism spectrum disorder is a highly variable disorder and no two people manifest the same way. We need to allow for this variation to be taken into account before subjecting a family to a truancy action.

Thank you.