



**Date:** February 18, 2015  
**To:** House Education Committee, Chair Doherty and Members  
**From:** Hanna Vaandering, OEA President  
**RE:** *HB 2602 and HB 2650 [Educational Supports for Low-income Students]*

The 42,000 members of the Oregon Education Association have long advocated for policies that help our low-income students. Research is clear that the number-one indicator of a young person's academic success is the family's socio-economic status. That is why we are here today to support these initiatives to give an extra boost to our children in or near poverty.

According to articles in the *American Sociological Review* and the National Center for Educational Statistics, the so-called "summer slide" phenomenon accounts for two-thirds of the achievement gaps we see in Oregon. **(Sources: *American Sociological Review*; Karl L. Alexander, Johns Hopkins University; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; National Center for Educational Statistics. Reported by Ruchika Tulshyan)**

Only by offering our young people a place to go when school is not in regular session – for art, sports, reading, and other activities – will we be able to make sure that our low-income students are not left struggling to play catch-up with their more-affluent peers. That's why we have supported summer instructional legislation in recent sessions and support HB 2602 now.

Other studies have shown that the average five-year-old from a poor family comes to school understanding 30 million fewer words than their better-off peers. **(Source: "The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3" by University of Kansas researchers Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley. (2003). [American Educator](#). Spring: 4-9.)** Anything we are able to do to close the vocabulary gap will benefit them as they progress through their educational careers. We believe that HB 2650, which will

provide access to summertime early reading programs via the State Library, may be one such solution, and we think it's worth a try.

But as you consider these and other proposals, we ask that you keep in mind just how many students need our help.

With Oregon's economy just now beginning to emerge from years of recession, hundreds of thousands of people are still having trouble making ends meet even though they're working hard. For instance, Oregon has one of the nation's highest rates of SNAP (food stamp) participation. More than 440,000 families are receiving SNAP benefits every month. With federal cuts to this program, Oregon families who were already struggling are now having to make do with less. There's a tremendous amount of unmet need, and that need is expected to stay above pre-recession levels for at least another decade.

(SOURCE: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/food-stamps-put-rhode-island-town-on-monthly-boom-and-bust-cycle/2013/03/16/08ace07c-8ce1-11e2-b63f-f53fb9f2fcb4\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/food-stamps-put-rhode-island-town-on-monthly-boom-and-bust-cycle/2013/03/16/08ace07c-8ce1-11e2-b63f-f53fb9f2fcb4_story.html))

Other startling statistics are these: 50 percent of babies born today in our state are on the Oregon Health Plan for low-income families. And fully 48 percent of Oregon students qualify for free and reduced meals in school. While the "official" poverty rate is lower – 23 percent – the conditions of too many of our children are based on a level of struggle close to or below the poverty line that impacts learning in a variety of ways. While more well-off students are able to enjoy access to camps, reading programs, and other enrichments, many low-income children have no such supports. Now is the time to ensure that every child has a safe and stimulating summer environment while their parents are at work.

Please support HB 2602 and HB 2650. Thank you.