



DATE: March 10, 2015

TO: Ways and Means Education Subcommittee Members

FROM: Iris Maria Chavez, Government Affairs Director, Stand for Children Oregon

RE: House Bill 5016

Co-chairs Sen. Monroe and Rep. Komp and members of the committee, my name is Iris Maria Chavez. I am the government affairs director with Stand for Children Oregon. Our focus is on ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, have access to a quality public education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of House Bill 5016.

At Stand for Children, we believe that education is the key that unlocks the door to success, however far too many children are not getting the education they need to prepare them for the future. Under the thoughtful leadership of Deputy Superintendent Rob Saxton, and his team, Oregon has made great strides in the last several years to better make a high quality education a reality for more students. Oregon has shown this commitment by:

1. improving the culture of schools through reforms to school discipline practices,
2. by increasing access to effective educators through initiatives like the Network for Quality Teaching & Learning,
3. and recent efforts to ensure students are on track for success through a 3rd grade reading initiative
4. And by implementing full day kindergarten for Oregon students.

These are just a couple of the areas that ODE has focused efforts to improve schools. Oregon is still troubled by large achievement, and opportunity, gaps that are not closing fast enough. We owe our students better, and faster, progress. At Stand for Children, we believe that while we need to ensure funding is at a level that enables our districts and schools to continue operating at current service levels, and applaud your effort to go above the Governor's recommended K-12 funding number, we also know that investing our dollars equitably to support achievement gap closing efforts is essential.

The Oregon Department of Education has identified a number of efforts that will ensure that students who most need additional supports and resources receive those. These are efforts that are work we've begun in previous years, and new investments that we know, through research, will have a positive impact on students. We urge you to support continuation of efforts such as:

1. *Preschool (\$30 million increase)* Too many young children living in poverty do not, currently, have access to early learning opportunities such as pre-school. With this investment, the state would be able to invest in high quality early learning opportunities, which is essential to ensuring that our youngest arrive at kindergarten on a level playing field.
2. *The Network for Quality Teaching (\$55 million)* An educator has the single biggest, in school, impact on a student's academic achievement, we must show a commitment to putting a high quality, supported, educator in front of every classroom. The Network impacts the full continuum of a professional educator career pathway and is the tool by which the state can make investments in teachers and leaders that are evidence based and research driven, including: the School District Collaboration Fund; the Oregon Beginning Teacher and Administrator Mentoring Program; teacher and administrator performance evaluations; improved teacher preparation; and, school and district leader initiatives. In districts utilizing funds from the Network, we are seeing achievement gaps shrinking, we must take this effort to scale and fully fund it at \$55 million.
3. *3rd Grade Proficiency (\$85 million)* If children from low-income families are reading on grade level by the end of third grade, then they will be more likely to succeed academically and graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and in careers. Early grade reading proficiency continues to be unacceptably low for students from low-income families and children of color. We urge you to support the literacy work that the Department, advocates, educators and parents have identified as being instrumental to the success of our young people.
4. *Supporting English language learner students* As a state, Oregon is long overdue for a discussion on how to improve outcomes for our ELLs. The graduation rate for EL students in Oregon is only 49% and 71% of Oregon's 4th grade ELL students are below basic in their reading skills. As a state we must increase our focus and urgency on improving outcomes for English learners and the Department has made great strides, under the work of David Bautista, with the statewide ELL strategic plan. We need to continue our investment to implement that work *and identify additional ways to better support districts struggling to educate ELLs.*

The above mentioned areas of investment are top priorities for the membership of Stand for Children. On behalf of our members I also want to say that it takes strong leadership to identify problems, propose thoughtful solutions, and implement them. In his tenure as head of ODE, Rob has demonstrated the type of leadership we need. Our kids deserve to have a leader at the helm who is committed to ensuring equity is embedded throughout all of our efforts and who understands the system inside and out. We appreciate all the work that you, as members of the ways & means education subcommittee have done to date on these issues. We understand that you have an arduous task, in aligning all of these pieces, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure we are closing achievement, and opportunity, gaps in Oregon.