



Testimony in support of HB 3499

By Arora Ayon, Stand for Children Leader

March 30th, 2015

Members of House Education committee,

My name is Aurora Ayon, I am member and leader of Stand for Children along with many other parents from East County. I have three children in the Reynolds School District. My oldest son is 18 years old and a senior at Reynolds high school, he will graduate in June of this school year. My 15 year old daughter is in tenth grade and my youngest daughter is 8 years old and attends second grade at Salish Ponds Elementary in Reynolds school district.

I am writing this letter in support of HB 3499 because I believe in the importance of strengthening the ELL program to ensure all students benefit from public education equally and are able to get on a path to academic success.

I want to share my personal experience with my older children. They attended a preschool program in California, and were English language learners during pre-school. This was a program where children went to school for three hours per day five days a week.

My family's first language is Spanish, and that is what we speak at home. The preschool program really helped my children and they were able to build their language skills in their second language. When we moved to Oregon, my son entered kindergarten mid-year and both my husband and I knew he was ready and at grade level. When he was tested to determine if he needed ELL services it turned out that he did not need them. The same happened with my daughter.

My concern is with my youngest child. She has been in ELL since she started public school and is still in the program. I don't know that she was wrongly classified. But I would like to be sure that there are clear indicators that lead my child to continue to need English Language services. And as a parent, I want to understand that process.

In my opinion and based on my own personal experience, Children should be in ELL programs for less than 7 years, especially if they were born in this country. It is easier for children to learn at younger ages and we should make the most of their early years so that in the future they are performing well in school. We need more programs that are designed to strengthen and promote the development of all our children. I know that the staff at my children's school care deeply about my daughter and other children in the school. We have seen some changes already begin. But I know that HB 3499 would be another big step in the right direction.

Thank you for considering my experience,

Sincerely,

Aurora Ayon