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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 41
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HB 3319

House Education Committee
March 30th, 2015

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am Kathleen Taylor, State Representative for District 41, which encompasses Milwaukie, Oak Grove, and portions of Southeast Portland. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about House Bill 3319. I will keep my comments brief, as to allow for the education professionals from The Oregon Education Investment Board, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), and Stand for Children to provide background on this issue.

Before going further, it is important the committee know an amendment to House Bill 3319 is currently being drafted. This amendment will require all school districts report annually to ODE about the methods each district has been using to address chronic absenteeism and reduce high school dropout. ODE will analyze this information and report back to the legislature about actions being taken to increase graduation rates and attendance across the state.

In talking about the problem of graduation rates in Oregon, I'd like to cite a few statistics that I'm sure Committee Members are aware of, but that are nonetheless alarming:

- In 2014, Nearly 3 out of 10 Oregon seniors failed to earn a diploma in four years.
- For the 2012-2013 school year, Oregon had the lowest graduation rate of any state in the nation.
- Also, in the 2012-2013 school year, approximately 100,000 students missed 3.5 weeks of school or more, over 10% of their given schools days for that year.

The reasons for these statistics are complex and no single method can alone fully tackle this problem. By taking the time to evaluate and disseminate information about the most effective ways to keep our students in school and on track to graduate, we can begin the hard work of increasing Oregon's graduation rates.

The other area I'd like to highlight is chronic absenteeism—the approximately 100,000 students in our state missing 3.5 weeks of school or more a year. By addressing problems with attendance, we ensure students are receiving the instructional time they need to stay on track to graduate. I hope this information will help ODE determine what links there are between attendance and graduation.

I look forward to hearing further testimony on this issue and any questions the Committee Members may have.

Thank you.