

HB 3496 Testimony
Friday, April 10

Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony today. I am Matt Utterback, superintendent of the North Clackamas School District, the state's fifth largest, with over 17,000 students.

I am testifying today in support of HB 3496 that would expand transportation reimbursement to include transportation for students participating in summer session classes provided by a school district.

For decades, the Legislature has protected as a vital service student transportation to and from school. It is seen as the only way for many students to access the free public education available to them.

Providing summer school transportation removes a barrier for our neediest students to access academic support. This academic support fills academic gaps for students, prevents summer "slide," allows much needed ongoing practice in English, and propels students forward.

We know the Oregon school year is too short and in many districts across the state, the answer is to develop a robust and relevant summer school program to engage students, provide credit recovery, and, in some cases, offer food and health services unavailable to students otherwise.

School districts focused on key academic performance indicators of increasing 3rd grade reading, 8th grade algebra readiness, 10th grade on track credit attainment and strong high school graduation rates will offer multiple on-ramps for students to get back on track and multiple on-ramps to propel students forward. This often includes a summer school program.

Summer school classes come with a big barrier to participation for many students – and that barrier is transportation. This bill removes the financial barrier for school districts to providing summer school options. Many districts, when applying an equity lens, recognize that providing summer school without providing transportation is leaving some of its community's neediest students behind.

Students living in a district's most rural areas, students without safe paths to school and students with limited access to public transportation often have no safe transportation options in order to access summer school and are left even further behind their peers who are lucky enough to have transportation access.

In addition to access to summer school classes, providing summer school transportation increases access to food stability as summer food programs are often paired with summer school classes.

In North Clackamas, we work hard to provide a number of summer learning options for our students. These include Jump Start to Kindergarten, Title I Summer School for our elementary primary students, and a large high school credit recovery program.