



**Testimony of Kimberly McCullough, Legislative Director
In Support of SB 553-A and SB 556
House Committee on Education
April 27, 2015**

Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of SB 553-A and 556, which will keep students safe and learning by limiting the use of suspensions and expulsions for elementary students and prohibiting the use of expulsion to address truancy.

The school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) refers to the policies and practices that push students—especially youth of color—out of schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. In our view, students are funneled into the STPP primarily by a zero-tolerance approach to discipline, characterized by inflexible and excessive use of punitive disciplinary measures (like suspension and expulsion) by schools. These punitive disciplinary measures greatly increase the likelihood that students will drop out of school and become involved in the juvenile justice system.

In 2010 the ACLU of Oregon published an Oregon School to Prison Pipeline report¹, which was updated in 2013², examining data around discipline in Oregon schools. We learned that, while African American youth represented just 2.5% of the student population, they represented 6.5% of all students receiving out-of-school suspension in Oregon. For the Hispanic or Latino population, though they represented 21% of the total student population, 23.8% of students receiving receiving out-of-school suspension were Latino. For Native American students, who represented 1.8% of the total student population in Oregon, their share of out-of-school suspensions 2.8%.

Smart discipline policies are an important civil rights issue not just because of the disparate impact of the STPP on students of color, but because behavior and discipline policies that keep students in school prioritize learning and safety over criminalization of school children.

We urge your support of SB 553-A and 556—important bills for student achievement across the state. Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to be in touch at any time with questions or comments.

¹ http://aclu-or.org/sites/default/files/ACLU_STPP_FINAL_0.pdf

² http://aclu-or.org/sites/default/files/ACLUF_OR_STTP_Update_2013.pdf