



DATE: May 19, 2015

TO: Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee

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

RE: House Bill 3319

Chair Roblan, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss HB 3319 with you all today. At Stand for Children, we have long worked to ensure that all students have access to a high quality education that prepares them for a productive life. For quite some time the workforce landscape has been changing to necessitate at least some post-secondary training, which requires that a student have a high school credential. The lifetime earnings of high school dropouts are \$260,000 less than peers who earn a diploma and have been found to cost taxpayers \$292,000 over the course of their lives. There are many factors that can lead a student to drop-out during their K-12 career, patterns of engagement in their education that can begin in early years and financial factors, to name a couple. We also know that there are schools across Oregon that have decided to proactively tackle this issue.

I mentioned patterns of engagement as a contributor to drop-out for some students, and to be specific, I do mean attendance in school. Absenteeism is a lead warning sign that a student is on a path to dropping out. As with dropping out, there are a myriad of reasons students are not attending school regularly, but Oregon is currently facing quite a challenge in reducing absenteeism and thus drop-outs. We currently are 4th from the bottom across all states, in both 4th & 8th grade attendance, and patterns such as these have a significant impact on whether a student attends HS regularly and graduates, making this a warning sign we must take seriously.

At Stand, we have been working in communities across the state to help parents be the first attendance monitor in their student's lives, with the Children's Institute and Chalkboard Project to identify policy and practice solutions to the attendance and drop-out challenge and we recognize that there is much work going on in individual schools & districts. HB 3319 will allow us, as policymakers, advocates and educators, to better know what drop-out prevention is working, and where, and how these strategies vary depending on the root-cause they're identifying. Having this type of comprehensive information will better enable ODE and policymakers to identify ways to support schools & districts in this work, advocacy groups to target our parent & community engagement efforts, and students to have the support & resources they need to stay engaged and complete high school.

We encourage you to take on this issue and thank Rep. Taylor for her commitment to our students.