

## TESTIMONY FOR SB215

Thank you Senator Roblan and members of the committee. My name is Karen Gray and I am the superintendent of the Parkrose School District. I was fortunate to be selected to be a member of Senator Roblan's SB 215 committee in order to help determine the future of the Oregon Education Investment Board. It was an effective and efficient committee that was diverse in representation and highly collaborative. As usual, Senator Roblan was able to get the best out of everyone on the committee and for the most part, we were in sync on many of the major issues. It was really quite amazing that so many people representing so many diverse interests were able to agree so quickly on so many topics regarding OEIB.

To me, the most important action of what I hope will be named something like the "Oregon P-20 Coordinating Council" approach is that we barrier bust. We suffer with crucial barriers to providing the best education possible for our Oregon children and they continue to pay the price. The first barriers are the key transitions between grades, which are between pre school (if you are lucky enough to go to one) and kindergarten, grade school to middle school, middle school to high school and then from high school to college and careers. Why do these transition barriers persist? They exist and persist because we don't ever get into the same room at the

same time to have honest discussions about how to knock down the walls. We are stuck in our own institutional traditions and the way we've always done it. No wonder we keep getting the same bad results—kids graduation and drop out rates can be predicted and tallied by race, social class, sexual orientation and SES. The work group will be creating crucial connections and developing solid education models during the interim between legislative sessions. We must have a shared vision of a seamless system of education from cradle to career in Oregon or die trying. Maybe this time we can actually make it happen.

The second barrier we must bust is the barrier of racism. The fact is that students of color are growing in number in Oregon every year and the corresponding fact is that these students fail, drop out, become incarcerated and part of the school to prison pipeline at alarming rates. Several actions will help to staunch this flow. The Oregon Educator Equity Advisory Committee is working on creating ways for more teachers and administrators of color to come and STAY in Oregon. The All Hands Raised Collaborative in Multnomah County, part of the Regional work we are doing in Oregon, is changing the conversation by bringing culturally specific community based organizations, businesses, school districts and higher ed together to have conversations about race and poverty. I hope this work will serve as a model for the state in moving our awareness and consciousness of race forward.

I appreciate the work that was done on the committee, the diligence of the committee to have hard conversations and the leadership of Senator Roblan to move Oregon education toward a brighter future through P-20 collaborations, meaningful connections and a powerful shared vision for the future of Oregon kids. Maybe this time we will succeed.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.