

Whitney Grubbs, Testimony in Support of HB 2534
March 28, 2017

Chair Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee.

For the record, my name is Whitney Grubbs. I am here today to testify in support of HB 2534, creating the Oregon Opportunity Commission and Fund.

I have had the honor to work in education for more than a decade, including as an advisor to the Governor, Chief Education Office, several Oregon foundations, and many community-based collaboratives that are working to improve outcomes in all corners of Oregon. Through that work, I have seen that improving key education outcomes for our state – and reducing the vast disparities that exist – requires the commitment, perspectives and resources of multiple sectors. Examples from East Multnomah County – where All Hands Raised is bringing together DHS workers, school counselors, and teachers working in teams to reduce chronic absenteeism – to rural Ontario, where a coalition of local businesses, farmers and educators has leveraged state and philanthropic resources to bring career and technical education options back to the community.

There is a powerful multiplier effect that occurs when state and local government, philanthropy, and the private sector pool resources toward common goals. And there is a much greater likelihood of powerful and lasting change when solutions come not from the top down, but from the bottom up -- through efforts that empower, support and assist communities in building upon local assets and opportunities.

Frequently, when I ask community members what could better support them to accelerate progress on reducing poverty and improving outcomes for their children and families, they point to barriers at the state level. They question whether the various state and local agencies could better support them by leveraging multiple funding streams, streamlining and aligning multiple initiatives, making grant processes less burdensome, and helping build local capacity and know-how.

The Oregon Opportunity Commission creates a mechanism through which the state can directly support communities in ways that are responsive to their needs and that evidence shows us work. I urge your support for HB 2534.