



To: Senate Committee on Education  
From: Richard Donovan, Oregon School Boards Association  
Re: Senate Bill 297  
Date: March 29, 2017

Chair Roblan and members of the Senate Committee on Education:

On behalf of OSBA members, including 197 school districts and 19 Education Service Districts throughout the state of Oregon, thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 1004. For the following reasons OSBA opposes SB 297.

SB 297 would create a new board, a CTE-STEM Investment Council, ostensibly to replace the existing STEM Investment Council, which the measure abolishes. The new council would, it appears, be very similar in composition to the existing council, but would have greatly-expanded control over career and technical education (CTE) programs in Oregon. The new council would maintain the existing control of the current council has over science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs. Enacting SB 297 and extending STEM Investment Council control to CTE programs appears to represent a hostile takeover of an entire programmatic area without regard for the best interests of the students of Oregon.

In 2013, via HB 2636,<sup>1</sup> the Legislature created STEM Investment Council. The composition of the Council is left almost entirely to the Executive branch. The composition of the CTE-STEM Investment Council that would be created by SB 297 is so similar that it is almost identical: 11 voting members rather than nine, more non-voting members, but very close to having the same composition.

However, the charge of the new council would be much broader. It would be responsible for advising on all CTE and STEM investments, including existing CTE Revitalization Grants programs and impending Ballot Measure 98 grants. This represents hundreds of millions of dollars of new oversight. The relatively modest goals of the current council-doubling 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math proficiency by 2025- would be replaced by a broad policy mandate to advise on or manage almost all areas of CTE and STEM policy in Oregon. SB 297 would also remove the existing requirement for an annual report to the Legislature and replace it with an at will reporting option. It would also permit some data gathering that the current STEM Investment Council is not responsible for.

There is no need for these changes. This is especially true in consideration of the items that are absent from the bill. There is no requirement for any programmatic or classroom-level experience or expertise. There are no educators, administrators, or

<sup>1</sup> HB 2636 (2013) was influenced by the findings of the “Task Force on STEM Access and Success,” which was created by HB 4056 (2012). The bill states the purpose of that task force as finding ways encourage students “to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics.”

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school board members listed as voting members. There is no required coordination between the agency personnel doing the actual school- and program-level work and the CTE-STEM Investment Council members. These are glaring omissions.

Proponents of SB 297 will likely advocate for the measure on the basis that it brings two very similar areas of policy closer together. It will not do that. Currently, CTE programs are overseen by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) under the auspices of the Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction. ODE has created a structure to manage CTE programs that ensures relevant staff have the experience, knowledge, and expertise to properly work with school districts. They are trained and skilled, and many are former educators and administrators. When ODE administers CTE grants, the existing process includes follow-up mechanics to ensure that the funds were spent as planned. The text of SB 297 has no similar accountability measures. While it is important to have private sector voices in CTE and STEM policy, giving vastly increased oversight to private sector actors could lead to disastrous outcomes for Oregon's students.

OSBA would be happy to participate in conversations around proper CTE and STEM policy oversight and direction. Until the time, however, that a broad conversation about education oversight and governance occurs, and these issues can be included in that conversation, OSBA cannot support SB 297. Thank you for your consideration.