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April 2, 2017

To the House Committee on Education:

I am writing this letter in support of House Bill 3263 that directs the State Board of Education to adopt standards for provision of occupational therapy services to students who have individualized education programs.

There are currently *no* state guidelines for occupational therapist caseloads in the Oregon school system. This results in exceedingly high caseloads for occupational therapists, often greater than 100 students. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federally mandated law that requires adequate occupational therapy services listed as a related service on students' Individual Education Program (IEP). However, in Oregon this important federal mandate is not being adhered to statewide due to a lack of workload regulation. HB 3263 would provide important guidelines that will ensure adherence of IDEA, lead to better management of occupational therapy services, and improve student outcomes statewide.

As a currently practicing occupational therapist in the Oregon City School District I have first hand experience with how necessary this bill is for our schools and students. I currently serve 5 schools throughout our district, resulting in more than 75 students ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade on my caseload. I have more students who are in an initial evaluation for services. Students with profound disabilities generally receive 90 minutes of consult service per year. *That is 10 minutes per month.* Students with more severe disabilities typically receive 120 minutes per year. I observe, evaluate, and develop treatment plans for students, while also writing reports, attending IEP meetings, and supervising two occupational therapy assistants. There simply isn't enough time to ensure that students are receiving an adequate amount of services. Teachers are left without sufficient ways to support students with disabilities in their classrooms. This system is unsustainable and I often find myself asking, "*Is this ethical?*"

Students with disabilities are our most vulnerable population and they deserve better. Solidifying workload limits for occupational therapists who serve our Oregon school system will be an important step to ensure that *all* of our students can meet their educational goals. Please support HB 3263 – our students depend on it.

Sincerely,

Natalie Schaad, OTD, OTR/L