

House Education Committee
April 5th, 2017

Chair Doherty, members of the committee, good afternoon. For the record, I am Bethany Thramer, Policy & Outreach Coordinator for OregonASK Expanded Learning Partnership, and am here in support of Summer Learning. OregonASK is a collaboration of partners and stakeholders that have been working for the last 12 years to advocate on behalf of afterschool and summer programs as we simultaneously work to increase the quality of and access to programs around Oregon. We believe that summer learning is critical to the success of Oregon youth, particularly to low income youth who suffer most from summer learning loss.

We were honored to work with Representative Smith Warner and the Summer Learning Work Group and sincerely hope you will read the report submitted that includes the findings and recommendations of the this experienced group of diverse stakeholders. As part of the work group, we were not only able to share some of our expertise, but were also able to help identify the current gaps and challenges in Oregon's summer learning landscape.

Over the last several years, OregonASK has been able to work with national and local partners to collect qualitative and quantitative data that helps demonstrate our case. The evidence is clear, summer learning offers significant, tangible benefits for all communities, schools, and students. And when we look at Oregon, we will not be able close the achievement gap without reducing summer learning loss. So, what changes in education policy must happen in order for us to be successful?

I would like to highlight just a few of the findings from the summer learning work group report. Within the report, you will find reference to several keys areas of focus that stakeholders agreed were the potential 'sweet spots' for targeting summer learning efforts.

- First, looking at how few students are reading by third grade; summer programs focused on reading could center around schools and libraries and emphasize enrichment activities that require reading -- from theatre arts to STEM/STEAM.
- Secondly, the high demand for remedial instruction, especially during transition years suggests that programs should be designed around the **application** of academic skills gained during the school year with an emphasis on social activities to help keep youth engaged and build necessary life skills.
- Third, our low high school graduations rates can be addressed with work experience, internships, labs, or summer jobs can help young people stay on track in school and work, as they work towards gainful employment or postsecondary education.

Besides the work group recommendations, there are several recent reports that I'd like to call your attention to that support the findings. In the report released by the Chief Education Office this February, titled *Practices to Improve the Achievement of Students in Poverty*, superintendents and districts were asked to identify strategies for supporting youth in poverty. The number one response from districts themselves, when asked for specific items they would

add, 64.1% responded **more time for learning in afterschool and summer**, as the most crucial service missing.

Additionally, the national 11 state study, *Afterschool Learning is a Powerful STEM Solution*, conducted by the PEAR Institute at Harvard released March 1, 2017, collected data that demonstrated the success of utilizing informal STEM to help move the dial on the STEM interest and STEM knowledge of youth. Fifteen Oregon programs were part of this study. You've been provided with the synopsis handout that shows some of the impacts that afterschool and summer programs are having on youth. We know, and can show that providing quality informal STEM opportunities increases youth STEM interest, as well as increasing self-perception as a scientist, engineer or mathematician.

Overall, we have found that in high quality summer learning, students gain skills. Period. Whether those are basic literacy skills or hands-on workforce experiences, summer learning is an essential component for the entire continuum of Oregon youth. Although summer learning is anything but, one-size fits all - the unique attributes offered by any quality summer learning program can help address the widest range of issues we face today.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.