

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNT INFORMATIONAL HEARING TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SB
437 BEFORE THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE By Capt. John M. (Mike) Jager Ret.
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Members of the Committee, my name is Mike Jager, and I'm a father of 13 children and Grandfather of 16. I want to thank the committee for meeting to discuss the potential for Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Oregon.

I believe that ESAs, similar to those proposed in SB 437, could be the silver bullet of education reform that our State has for so many years failed to put into place. In fact from an education standpoint, our State has continued to try to improve buggy whips even though they've been obsolete for decades. And it appears the focus of the State is to protect the buggy whip manufactures.

As a parent, my children have received education through public schools (including inter-district transfers), Department of Defense schools, private schooling for two years in Saudi Arabia, home schooling, charter schooling, and paid tutoring (Sylvan). One of our children was on an IEP throughout his high school

years. I have three children who left public school at 15 to get GEDs because they were not progressing. One of them is now a Lieutenant in the Air Force graduating through ROTC at OSU; and another, having completed her junior year in college, is serving an internship for the FBI this summer. My daughter, who we paid to be tutored at the Sylvan Learning Center, struggled with math. The tutoring worked, and she went on to get a full ride Ford Foundation scholarship, attaining a Master's of Science degree in Exercise Science. We currently have three children in higher education; one attending Law School, another in the Marriot School of Business at BYU, and a daughter (the FBI intern) who will be a senior this fall. I have one child set to start college this fall after completing a two-year mission for our Church in Ghana Africa. He has a \$60,000 scholarship to attend Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; the nation's oldest technological research university. Of our 11 adult children, only two have chosen not to further their education through college. I hope you concede that by the choices given my wife and I to guide our children's education, we have achieved a level of success that makes us credible resources for which education processes work. And we feel strongly that the State always seems to be looking in the wrong direction to make education policy.

I believe the State has lost sight of who the real constituencies for education are. Every time I hear how education "Stake Holders" are brought together to help improve education policy, I'm amazed the State invites the buggy whip manufacturers to handicap the process. I can't even recall all the reforms suggested by professional educators, and approved by the legislature, that have drained resources and failed to actually make any significant improvements. Administrators, unions, and even public school teachers have a tremendous stake in maintaining the status quo. Their livelihoods depend on the existing system. The focus of education needs to be on the real stake holders—the families of Oregon. The mothers, fathers and children of our State should be the sole constituency for which our State education system is focused. Buildings, districts and employees are valuable tools in the process; but the tool should never be the focus or the driving force of the structure to be created.

ESAs would allow the actual purpose of education in the State to be fulfilled by allowing the real stake holders of education to make the choices for reform that work best for individual families; and create a vibrant market for education choice for all children in Oregon, regardless of their means. The only way to actually improve education in Oregon, and prevent another generation from fully succeeding, is to break away from the constraints allowed to flourish under an existing system that fails so many

students. ESAs are the inevitable vehicle to allow that break to take place. I want to leave you to consider this one question. Who do you want making education choices for your children? A committee of educators and legislators who don't know your children, and have for decades failed to make any significant improvements in our State's education system; or you, the father or mother who knows what's best for your child. I don't care if you're a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or Unaffiliated, ESAs would allow all of us to choose the best education path for their own children.

Thank you for your time.

Mike Jager

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Bobbie Jager