

TAX REFORM JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAX REFORM
PUBLIC TESTIMONY BY MARK JACKSON, REAP INC.

HOUSE BILL 2830
REVENUE REFORM AND EDUCATION STABILITY ACT OF 2017

TIME: 8:30AM | LOCATION: HEARING ROOM A

Good morning Co-Chair's Barnhart and Hass and members of the committee. My name is Mark Jackson, Co-founder and Executive Director of REAP Inc. REAP is a year around multicultural youth leadership program committed to empowering students in grades 3-12 every year, who represent our most at-risk student population. REAP ignites, elevates and engages ALL students to be global leaders through civic engagement, entrepreneurship and cooperative management (conflict resolution).

Today I am here to lend my support of House Bill 2830, commonly known as the Revenue Reform and Education Stability Act of 2017. As I reflect on the possibilities of House 2830, I am reminded of the realities of the current landscape of our public school system:

- Oregon currently has the 3rd worst graduation rates in the nation.
- We are failing our students of color at even greater rates on this measure
- We have a short school year
- Large class sizes and high student to counselor ratios.

To better serve our students we need to provide our students with the time and support they need to graduate. This means hiring more teachers of color and training all staff in the use of culturally responsive practices.

It also means investing in community based organizations that offer essential supports that contribute to our students graduating from high school and being college and career ready.

According to research by ECONorthwest, If the achievement gap for Oregon's adult population had been eliminated a decade ago, **Oregon's economic activity would have been \$1.9 billion higher** by 2013

“Male students in 2014-15, as in prior years, dropped out at a higher rate than female students. With the exception of multiracial students, male students of every ethnicity dropped out at a higher rate than female students of the same ethnicity. **American Indian/Alaska Native and Black male students have the highest dropout rates.**”

Oregon can and should do better for its children. Not only are we turning our backs on a generation of youth and well-meaning educators, we are putting our state's future at risk. Adults without a diploma earn less, are more likely to be involved in the justice system, and are less engaged in their community.

As elected officials, you have an opportunity to create a renaissance in our public school system that will change the narrative of the future of our State. It's time to send a clear, courageous and collective message to our students that THEY ARE THE GREATEST INVESTMENT we can capitalize on.

It is this bold leadership that REAP lends to students and schools in Portland, Beaverton and Gresham. As a current grantee of the Oregon Youth Development Council and House Bill 2016 funding, REAP has contributed to:

1. Increased number of culturally diverse students on track from graduation
2. Increased high school rates for culturally diverse students
3. Reduced the number of discipline incidents and suspensions that historically lead many of our students of color into the school to prison pipeline. **For example, the following school partners experienced a reduction in discipline incidents with the support of REAP:**

Name	2015-16	2016-17
Oliver K-6 (CSD)	609	486
Parklane K-6 (CSD)	1074	334
Centennial HS (CSD)	571	364
Aloha HS (CSD)	1288	700

It is my request and recommendation that as a committee you support HB 2830:

- The Revenue Reform and Education Stability Act dedicates hundreds of millions of dollars to our schools, fulfilling the promises we've made to the next generation. By investing in schools, we can finally give Oregon kids the education they deserve.
- This funding could add back days to the school year, reduce class sizes, and allow districts to restore educational programs—including vocational and technical training—that have been cut since the recession. The proposal calls for funding efforts to improve Oregon's graduation rate.

I close with a personal success story of one of our REAP students:

Ishwag, a senior at Madison High School had frequent behavior problems, in-class outbursts, low attendance and a GPA below 1.0 at the beginning of this school year. Ishwa began attending REAP programing at the beginning of the year and is now graduating with a 3.0.

The inadequate, unstable, “status quo” in education funding has had a disproportionate impact on kids of color and low-income kids. If legislators seize this opportunity to make meaningful, sustained, and strategic investments in education, we could create life-changing opportunities for students, families, communities, and the whole state and economy. Imagine how many more students can experience the same level of success as Ishwag. Support HB 2830

Thank You!