



Oregon School Employees Association

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Chair Roblan Members of the Committee:

My name is Tyler Shipman I am a government relations specialist with the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA). Our association represents over 21,000 education employees across the state, including K-12 public schools, education service districts (ESDs), community colleges, Head Starts, park and recreation districts, and libraries. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of OSEA to speak in strong opposition of Senate Bill (SB) 437.

SB 437 would allow parents to establish education savings accounts for qualified children. The state would distribute a minimum of \$4,500 per qualifying student into the savings account. Parents could use this money for a variety of educational purposes like textbooks, private schools and tutoring. Parents would have full range in deciding what educational services and products to buy using a debit card.

The concept of education saving accounts is simply a renewed form of school vouchers. School voucher programs simply shift funds from public schools to fund the education of select students. Our public school program is already underfunded and the current proposed K-12 education budget of \$8.2 billion does not even fund schools at current service level. It is irresponsible to take funds away from public schools for a program that has no substantial evidence of providing any educational benefit to students.

SB 437 would do only one thing; hurt Oregon's students. Funds from these education savings accounts would be used with **no** accountability. The private school system is not prescribed to the same statewide standards and transparency that we proudly hold public schools to and as such the state could not ensure that the money was being spent appropriately. This would inherently make it more difficult to ensure that private schools are truly providing students a quality education. SB 437 does nothing to make a student's learning a priority, but simply subsidizes the costs of private schools.

OSEA believes that a well-funded public education system is the best way to provide quality learning opportunities to students. SB 437 would divert money away from public schools and into savings accounts for parents to use on education services for their children. In doing so, the state of Oregon would be funding private schools without any accountability or oversight of these programs. While this legislation seems to be well intended, it hurts Oregon's students while private schools benefit. OSEA urges you to oppose SB 437 because it hurts Oregon's public schools and students.