

Draft of testimony for the Joint Tax Reform Committee, Co-chairs Hass and Barnhart

RE: HB 2830 dash 2 [Tax Reform Package]

Co-chairs Hass and Barnhart thank you for the opportunity to address this joint committee. For the record, my name is Hanna Vaandering, I am an elementary physical education teacher and president of the Oregon Education Association. We appreciate the work of this committee and want to support you in addressing the structural issues with our tax system that have negatively impacted the students we work with every day. We believe your work will take us a step closer to honoring your constitutional obligation to fully fund our public education system (K-12 and post-secondary).

Right now we have students who are walking across the stage to receive their diplomas, one of the most meaningful walks one will have. But, as you know far too many of our students are not crossing the stage and are not being handed a ticket to success.

Why? The number one reason k-12 students drop out is - they do not have a relationship with their teachers.

The number one reason higher ed. students don't cross the finish line - they cannot afford it.

With the 3rd largest class size and one of the highest tuitions in the nation - none of us should be surprised.

As educators, we are neither surprised nor satisfied **and** as you can see by our actions, we are not going to stop until every student we have the honor of working with has access to a great public education in Oregon.

Oregon needs stability, fairness and action.

Districts need to know that there is stability in the funding they will receive and that they can invest in the programs and services that best meet the needs of the students who walk their halls. Our current tax structure does not allow this. The proposal before you will put us on that path.

We know that life is not always fair, but continuing to allow Oregon corporations to pay some of the lowest taxes in the nation impacts the students in our classrooms every day. I serve on the Quality Education Commission; we know what a prototypical school that allows our students to succeed looks like. Counselors, nurses, art, PE, music, librarians, class size that allows individualized instruction. WE are not there. This package, while not enough, begins us down that path.

We are encouraged by the many business that shared their support for this proposal. Unfortunately, a few business groups continue to say public employees and not our tax structure is the problem and that they want to help, but there is not enough time in this session to get it done. We disagree, WE have met with business representatives and stand ready to meet again to find a path to working together. Now is the moment to make this happen, we believe there is time and there is urgency.

For over two decades we have avoided the hard conversations and the right decision. WE have an equity lens that we like to talk about, we talk the talk, but we don't walk the walk. There are opportunity gaps and we are not meeting the needs of our students of color. The question is, are we going to take action or continue to talk? Dr. King said, "The time is always right to do what is right". The 44,000 members of OEA agree. We are willing to be part of the solution and we are looking to corporations to fulfill their promise of being part of the solution, but most of all, we are looking to you - the legislature who has the authority to do the right thing. The students of this state deserve better and you have the opportunity to make this happen.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions that you have.