



To: House Committee on Education
From: Richard Donovan, Oregon School Boards Association
Re: Ballot Measure 98
Date: February 8, 2017

Chair Doherty and members of the House Committee on Education:

On behalf of OSBA's membership, including 197 school districts throughout the state of Oregon, I am happy to respond to the committee request for our association's view of Ballot Measure 98 (BM 98), along with requested potential changes to the text of the measure.

OSBA supported Ballot Measure 98 during the 2016 election

The OSBA board voted to formally support BM 98. The members of the board vigorously debated concerns they had with the measure, including concerns with the funding provisions of the bill. With those concerns acknowledged, the statewide benefits of the policies detailed in the measure deserved support.

OSBA would support changes to some portions of Ballot Measure 98 in order to maximize benefit to schools, school districts, and students

OSBA continues to support the goals of BM 98, but would also support some changes to the measure in certain areas, including:

- *Changing the requirement that Measure 98 funds be spent in all three areas*

Measure 98 requires the creation of a plan that would spend any granted funds in three areas: Career and Technical Education (CTE), College-level training/ opportunities /programs, and programs aimed at dropout prevention/ improvement of graduation rates. These are all laudable goals. However, requiring all participants to spend grant moneys in all three areas will not allow schools the flexibility they need to focus on areas of greatest need. Some schools already have excellent graduation rates; others have robust CTE programs; these schools have very little room for improvement in those areas. BM 98 moneys could be better used if those schools could choose one or two areas of focus, rather than being required to work on all three.

- *Permitting expenditure of BM 98 funds at all grade levels, not just high school*

OSBA members would like the flexibility to spend BM 98 funds at any grade level. The trend in schools statewide recently has been towards increased integration, beginning in grades 6-12 and continuing into post-secondary grades. Many schools, particularly schools in eastern, southern, and other parts of rural Oregon, have programs that integrate elementary, middle, and high school programs, particularly in CTE and STEM classes. The calculation of BM 98 grant amounts is based upon the ADMw of students in

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grades 9-12, but our members would like the ability to spend those moneys on programs that, for example, begin as early as grade 5 or 6. These are the programs that first get many students interested in CTE and STEM courses. Limiting expenditures to only high school artificially binds school board members and administrators, creating problematic scenarios in which the obvious place for expansion of successful high school programs, e.g., middle school, is expressly prohibited.

- *Creating a “funding floor” for very small school districts*

Many of Oregon’s 197 school districts are small. Some are very small, with high school enrollments that number in the single-digits of students. In places like this, preliminary calculations indicate that districts may receive as little as a few thousand dollars. OSBA does not believe it is reasonable to expect a district to be able to successfully implement the requirements of BM 98 for such a small amount of funding. Creation of a minimum amount of funding, a so-called “funding floor,” would make BM 98 viable in those small districts. This model is one we use in every other aspect of budgeting for school funding in Oregon -- the ESD minimum, the small schools weight, etc. BM 98 should be no different.

- *Allowing longer grant cycles to improve district planning*

BM 98 is a grant program, and consequently operates on a biennial cycle. It is very hard for school districts to plan over the long term for a program that is funded on a biennial grant-funding cycle. OSBA would like to see a longer period of guaranteed time over which BM 98 moneys could be anticipated. The realities of planning programs for which funding will be “up in the air” every two years mean that school districts and administrators will, practically, never be able to give a teacher, student, or member of the community anything more than a one- to two-year guarantee that a program will continue. In other areas of education funding Oregon does not permit this kind of insecurity. For example, extended ADMw exists for just this reason. OSBA would like to see something similar in BM 98 funding.

- *Permitting increased flexibility in “supplement v. supplant”*

BM 98 requires any grant fund to be spent on new programs, thereby prohibiting the “supplanting” of funds that already are being spent on existing programs. OSBA members would like to see increased flexibility in this area. The current biennial budget is projected to be a “cuts” budget for most districts. In some districts, it may make sense to use BM 98 moneys to, in part, support an existing program. This will also avoid forcing a school to “close” an existing program, only to “open” a new program under a very similar name that offers a similar set of courses. These actions would comply with the letter, but perhaps not the spirit, of BM 98.