



To: Senate Committee on Education
From: Richard Donovan, Oregon School Boards Association
Re: Senate Bill 204
Date: February 14, 2017

Chair Roblan and members of the Senate Committee on Education:

On behalf of OSBA’s membership, including 197 school districts throughout the state of Oregon, thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 204, both as introduced and the proposed -1 amendments. OSBA would like to acknowledge and commend the proponents of the measure for the good work they have undertaken in advancing equity and addressing the achievement gap in Oregon. OSBA’s policies and priorities explicitly commit our organization to work towards closing the achievement gap by providing additional supports for students from traditionally underserved populations. With that acknowledged, OSBA has a number of concerns with SB 204-1, including:

- *The broad mandate for a new cultural competency certification statewide*

SB 204-1 would mandate that every “school district, school and educator... must be certified in culturally responsive practices and competencies.” The details of the certification content and process are unclear in the text of the measure. The actual requirements of the certification, e.g., who, how, the amount of the expense, etc., are unclear. The mechanism for the process of certification is unclear. Creation of a statewide mandate that would affect every educator, school, and school district that is also absent specificity and details is of concern to OSBA.

- *Potential unintended negative consequences of the cultural competency certification mandate*

SB 204-1 would seem to preclude schools from working organizations within their school communities to address the unique needs of the school populations in their district. School districts need the flexibility to work with the members of the local community, especially organizations that exist to address the local needs of traditionally underserved communities.

- *The short implementation timeline*

SB 204-1 would establish a pilot program that would commence work at the start of the 2017-18 school year, with the statewide mandate following at the start of the 2018-19 school year. The timeline is much shorter than many other timelines for statewide programs, and could potentially be too short for the ambitious mandates in the measure.

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