



**To:** Joint Committee on Student Success  
**From:** LeeAnn Larsen, President, Oregon School Boards Association,  
And Beaverton School Board Member  
**Re:** Education Assessment  
**Date:** February 9, 2018

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Good afternoon, Co-Chairs Roblan and Smith Warner, and members of the committee.

I'm LeeAnn Larsen, President of the Oregon School Boards Association, which represents more than 1,400 locally elected, volunteer members whose driving motivation is ensuring that our students succeed.

I also serve on the Beaverton School Board, and I'm proud to say that all five of my children have benefited from the outstanding public education provided in my Beaverton community.

Their journey through public K-12 education is over. But I cherish the hope that my as-yet unborn grandchildren – and every child across this state – will be afforded the opportunity to be successful. The steps of that stairway to success are dependent upon a flourishing statewide school system.

Creating such a system requires three key actions in our view: Establishing sustainable funding based upon comprehensive revenue reform and cost containment; requiring accountability that does not undermine local control; and creating a well-rounded education system that puts students' needs first.

As much as I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today, I think it might be instructive to share with you the words of one of your colleagues, Jennifer Williamson, last year after the Legislature was unable to come to agreement on the key issues of revenue reform and cost containment:

This session, we had not only an opportunity, but a moral obligation to rebuild the broken pieces of our budget and revenue systems, which have been crumbling for more than two decades. Instead, we're telling our students, yet again: Not this time.

Not this time. That was 2017.

But let's go back a little further and listen to then-Gov. Ted Kulongoski: "It is a sad commentary that today we face a choice between having schools that are a monument to our past – or schools that will be the lifeblood of our future."

That was 2003.

But let's go even further back, to then-Gov. Mark Hatfield, who said, "The number one problem in education is how to finance our programs."

That was 1959. Six decades ago. That is how long – and more – we have been talking about how to pay for schools.

The lesson here is that we have been mortgaging the futures of our young people by continuing to talk without translating those words into action. Today sit before you with a measure of hope because I believe that each of you shares my abiding interest in creating a better Oregon for our children. That is amply demonstrated by the co-chairs alone through the public-school volunteering by Rep. Smith Warner and the nationally recognized teaching career of Sen. Roblan.

So, where do we go from here?

First, we develop a rational system of paying for schools. Since the passage of Measure 5 in 1990, Oregon's system of paying for public services, including schools, has been in a shambles. OSBA's chief legislative priorities are revenue reform and cost containment, and statewide polling done for us last year makes clear that Oregonians value education highly and are willing to support hard choices about taxation provided that the funding goes to K-12 schools. We will submit that polling to your committee for its consideration.

Secondly, we recognize that if we collectively invest better in our schools then we will have to deliver better results in terms of graduation rates, student achievement and closing the achievement gap. We will work with you to establish accountability measures that also recognize the importance of local control.

Lastly, our children deserve to have well-rounded offerings that include the arts, music, career and technical education options, and advanced coursework. They deserve to be prepared for whatever path they desire after high school. Along with our partners at the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators and the Oregon Education Association, we surveyed more than 10,000 Oregonians statewide in 2016, and they overwhelmingly supported those goals. We are submitting a copy of that Oregon Rising study for your consideration.

As you weigh your choices it is our hope that your decision points will be guided with one question in mind: What is best for Oregon students? They are our future, and we owe them more than words.

Thank you.