

December 17, 2020

To: Joint Interim Committee on the Third Special Session of 2020  
From: Superintendent David Parker, Superintendent, Forest Grove School District  
Re: Testimony in Support of LC 21 (School Liability Protections)

Co-Chair Courtney, Co-Chair Kotek, and members of the Committee:

I want to thank everyone in the legislature for the hard work everyone has done to secure adequate funding for K-12 education. This investment will make a difference in improving services to our students and in providing access and opportunities to our historically underserved students. We thank you.

On behalf of the Forest Grove School District, I am here to ask for your support of Legislative Concept 21 to provide limited liability protection to our school districts, charter schools, education service districts, and community colleges.

A topic that is on the minds of every school district is dealing with the liability exposure we are currently experiencing. I think it is imperative that the state deals with this as we are getting more organized about returning students to school.

School Districts and Education Service Districts are not able to purchase insurance to protect against costs of COVID-19 lawsuits. Insurance carriers and re-insurers stopped offering COVID-19 and communicable disease policies in Oregon earlier this year. Our schools and districts across Oregon need the Legislature to take action and provide limited liability protection during the COVID-19 emergency. We are not asking for full immunity or protection from irresponsible actions, but our schools and districts should have some legal protections if we are following all the relevant guidance and rules for COVID-19 safety that have been issued by the Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Health Authority, OSHA and others.

Our district needs to know that if we are following state guidance to protect our students, staff, and community we will be protected from lawsuits related to COVID 19 exposure. Without this protection, we leave our district budget vulnerable no matter what we do.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I urge the passage of LC 21 so that we can begin to move forward confidently in returning students to the school setting.

Sincerely,



David Parker  
Superintendent  
503-359-2406

