

Testimony submitted 12/17/2020

Thank you Co-Chairs Courtney & Kotex, Vice Chairs Drazan & Girod and Members of the Joint Committee on the Third Special Session of 2020, for this opportunity to speak in support of Liability protections for public schools, LC21 and for your strong support and passage of the Student Success Act, last session

My name is Mitzi Bauer, Vice-Chair of the North Clackamas school board, Clackamas County

At North Clackamas school district, we are leaders in equity and hold the care for our students and staff at the highest priority.

We have not reopened due to the need to keep all of our students & staff safe and with no liability protections; this is of great concern amid a raging Pandemic.

This year we are all first year teachers, staff and first year board members as the world suddenly changed. Our district quickly made sure each student had a device and the technology to connect and continue with essential services of food and counseling.

We are grateful for the wise and steady leadership of Supt Utterback who exhibited his sincere care for our community as he chose to defer his retirement one more year to help us one. He first advised a clear understanding of the rules and guidelines and the many revisions that all districts received from ODE & OHA; while creating 3 new models for learning. He knew it was essential to train all staff on all guidelines and be committed to following ALL guidelines for safety and health for all students. By ALL I mean the 90 pages of the Ready Schools, Safe Learners document and the supplemental documents Ensuring Equity and Access & Implementing CDL (combined 109 pages) and others such as Planning for Covid Scenarios (41 pages) & Athletics Indoor & Outdoors (9 pages).

We take our job of education very seriously and are committed to strict implementation of all guidelines for every student on all levels and every classroom or activity. Our district needs to know that if we are following state guidelines to protect our students, staff, and community we will be protected from lawsuits related to COVID 19 exposure that would drain our already vulnerable budgets. No protections will remain a barrier to reopening even if case counts decrease.

This is a reasonable bill that balances the need to protect all and address our most vulnerable as it includes provisions to protect children and allows reports by whistleblowers if there is an incident due recklessness and disregard for the guidelines. Much thought and work was accomplished by the committee lead by Representatives Power & Sollmon. Thank you for your work.

We want to bring our students and staff back because we know that nothing can replace in-person learning; about 70 percent of students want to be back in the classroom. We are asking for reasonable protections and LC21 provides this. Please move this forward and help us get our students safely back in the classroom.

Thank you for being leaders for students and I will end with a quote: "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." – Malcomb X

Let's prepare by supporting LC21.