



To: Honorable Members of the Oregon House Education Committee
From: Dr. Beth L. Green, PhD., Director of Early Childhood & Family Support Research
Date: February 4, 2018
RE: Comments on House Bill 2318

I am writing this letter to voice my strong opposition to HB 2318. I am a Research Professor and Director of Early Childhood & Family Support Research at the Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services at Portland State University. I have worked in partnership with policy makers, schools, families, and communities for nearly 25 years in Oregon and nationally to create more supportive, equitable systems to ensure success for our youngest children. I currently serve on the Oregon Early Learning Council's Best Beginnings Advisory Committee (addressing policy for children from 0-3 years old) as well as the National Infant and Toddler Research Advisory Group (part of the U.S. Administration for Children, Youth and Families, focused on setting priorities for national investments in programs for young children).

I also served from 2010-2012 on the state task force that compiled research and community input on the development of the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment (OKA), and would like to make a few key points for your consideration:

- At the time, there was no information available at the state level about children's social/emotional or cognitive development that could be used to help teachers, schools, and policy makers make decisions about these children's needs and strengths, and how investments might be focused to provide effective early supports for children's learning. Providing this information to schools so that principals and teachers understand "where children are" in terms of their behavioral, early literacy, and early numeracy skills when they start school has been invaluable to the many schools and districts that I work with.
- I have testified before the Oregon State Legislature many times, often in response to requests for "evidence" about the effectiveness of Oregon's early learning programs. It was not until the development of the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment, however, that there was any type of statewide data available that could even begin to provide a research-based way to answer that question.
- The OKA has now become an important, useful, and developmentally appropriate tool for supporting practice and policy in Oregon, and to eliminate it would be a significant step backwards for children in Oregon. For example, using statewide OKA data, our research found that state funds provided for Kindergarten Readiness & Innovation programming were being successfully invested in schools where more children started off lacking key skills at kindergarten entry.
- In our work with the Early Works initiative, families as diverse as those in inner Southeast Portland and in rural Yoncalla Oregon have rallied around their local school's OKA data to advocate for increased investments in early childhood and kindergarten readiness programs.
- Changes in how the OKA is administered (eliminating timed sequences, improving guidance related to administration for non-English speaking children and children with special needs) have greatly improved its developmental appropriateness. As with any tool, there is always more room for improvement – but rather than eliminating the tool, I would urge legislators to provide more support and resources for interpreting, scoring, and providing feedback to schools and families about the OKA. With this support Oregon stands poised to be a national leader in creating and implementing one of the few statewide early childhood assessments that includes



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indicators of social-emotional development, a true foundation for children's early learning – in addition to more traditional indicators of early literacy and numeracy known to be predictive of later school success.

I respectfully urge you to reject House Bill 2318, and instead, to continue to support the important work of the Oregon Department of Education and the Early Learning Division to improve the OKA and to ensure that it is used in ways that support success for Oregon's youngest citizens.

Sincerely,

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