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Colt Gill

Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

SB 12: Safe and Effective Schools for All

Senate Education Committee

February 11, 2019

Good afternoon Chair Wagner, and members of the committee. For the record I am Colt Gill, Director of the Oregon Department of Education. I am here to testify in favor of SB 12 and its -1 amendments, the Safe and Effective Schools for All bill.

In my travels around the state with my work on graduation improvement, the Oregon Education Association Disrupted Learning Forums, or the meetings of the Joint Committee on Student Success—students, families, and school staff expressed safety and inclusion concerns due to behavior impact by trauma, harassment, bullying, intimidation, or feeling marginalized and unwelcome based on protected class status.

In 2017, more than 9% of 8th graders reported not going to school at least one day in the previous 30 due to safety concerns (2017 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey). Nearly one in three 8th graders – and over one in five 11th graders – reported having been bullied at school in 2017 (2017 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey). More than 30% of Oregon 8th graders in 2017 reported feeling “so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks in a row” that they “stopped doing some usual activities” (2017 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey). Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youths aged 10 to 24 years in Oregon in 2017 (Oregon Health Authority, 2018).

We have a primary responsibility to ensure that our children safe, welcome and included in our schools. Academic achievement and improve and behavior problems decrease when schools invest in social and emotional learning.

I convened the Advisory Committee on Safe and Effective Schools for All Students to discuss these issues and deliberate on ways to make our schools more welcoming and safe.

The committee was made up of a broad coalition of 45 stakeholders from across Oregon, representing Oregon’s geographic and cultural diversity. It consisted of students, parents, educators, researchers, legislators, tribal members, school board members, civil rights and equity experts, health care providers, school resources officers, and individuals representing statewide education associations, culturally-specific community based organizations, other state agencies, early learning, mental health providers, and students with disabilities. Members

of the committee brought decades of expertise working with Oregon schools, students, educators, and staff.

In order to avoid duplication of effort and to take advantage of other ongoing efforts to make schools safe, the committee coordinated with the Oregon Task Force on School Safety, the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) Workgroup on the Social Determinants of Health and Education, the Oregon Education Association (OEA) Forum Series on Disrupted Learning Environments, as well as various state and local efforts to implement trauma-informed practices in education, childcare, healthcare, and human services.

The committee expressed support for a preventative approach when possible and early intervention when situations did arise. Members of the committee stated that educators and other school staff must be provided adequate training, resources, and implementation support to understand community and individual risk and protective factors that can improve the learning environment for *all* students. The committee also shared an understanding that education in Oregon should (1) be holistic, culturally responsive, equitable, and accessible for ALL students; (2) promote protective factors for students, families, and communities; (3) build strong, positive relationships between adults and students, as well as among students; and (4) use restorative approaches to maximize student access to instruction with an understanding of each student's unique needs and strengths.

The committee created nine policy recommendations.

1. Professional Learning: There should be adequate and sustained professional learning for those in day-to-day contact with children that includes culturally responsive pedagogy, social and emotional learning, restorative practices, trauma-informed practices, differentiated instruction, universal design for learning, and family engagement.
2. Co-location of services: The state should increase the co-location of physical, mental, and behavioral health services at schools so that students and families receive the supports they need.
3. Implementation Framework: Develop a framework of criteria to select, adopt, and implement evidence-based and promising practices, strategies, and programs. It would include restorative practices, inclusive practices, strategies for de-escalation of crisis, trauma-informed practices, culturally responsive and sustaining teaching/practices, social, cultural, and emotional learning, bullying and harassment prevention, suicide prevention, child abuse prevention, substance abuse prevention, and de-escalation practices

4. **Equity:** School districts should be aligned with the Oregon Equity Lens with regard to school safety, student discipline, and prevention programs to mitigate the impact on students of color; students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender; students with disabilities.
5. **Early Indicators:** The State of Oregon should make available an Early Indicator and Intervention System (EIIIS) for use by school districts to identify needs and intervene in real time.
6. **Data:** The State of Oregon shall collect and make available data about exclusionary and disproportionate practices, including specific data about children excluded from school due to behavior, put on an abbreviated school day, or those receiving in-school suspension.
7. **Representative Workforce:** The State of Oregon shall use promising practices to recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce, reflective of the population of Oregon students.
8. **Transitions:** The State of Oregon should provide resources and supports to school districts to develop policies and procedures to support transitions throughout a student's educational experience, including transitioning between schools; first contact with U.S. public education; reintroduction of incarcerated youth; and those transitioning between programs of support.
9. **Student and Family Voice:** The State of Oregon shall provide a process for students and families to have a voice to engage in all levels of decision-making.

SB 12 proposes to implement some of these recommendations in the following fashion.

First, it proposes a pilot program for at least 40 districts. Using an assessment tool developed by ODE, district staff will examine their policies and practices to identify whether those policies and practices help or hinder the district in having a welcoming and inclusive environment. The department will provide technical assistance to develop and implement a plan to improve the pilot districts' climate.

In selecting the participating schools, the department will consider the demographics of the district, the district's achievement gaps, the number and quality of the practices and strategies they propose to implement, and ensuring that participating districts reflect the different areas of the state.

Secondly, SB 12 creates a program to ensure that all districts implement an Early Indicator and Intervention System. These systems focus on the areas that most adversely affect graduating on

time: attendance, behavior, and course completion. Educators can easily identify students at high risk of not graduating. Information is at the school and student level. Once identified, those areas can be addressed. Districts can add factors and use the system in early education through high school. It is an automated system, freeing up teachers to teach.

The department shall assist each school district with technical assistance that include developing appropriate interventions and examining policies that may hinder graduation. All schools will be receiving some funding to implement the program; we are requesting a rate of \$3 per student in the district in the bill.

SB 12 will also create an opportunity for student voices to be heard through a state-level entity called the Oregon Student Policy Advisory Network. It is critical to engage youth in developing these solutions. It will be made up of regional student advisory bodies. The regional bodies' membership will represent all the demographics of the region; we don't just want to hear from the honor roll kids, but hear from a variety of perspectives. The regional groups will assist the school districts and ESDs in making school-specific decisions that affect the quality of life, education, or activities of the students of the schools by making recommendations that build an equitable and supportive environment; build trust and relationships in education settings; and reflect students' interests, values, and cultural heritage in the school curriculum and extracurricular activities. When they come together as the Network, they will advise the Deputy Superintendent and State Board of Education on these issues. The department will oversee the network and provide training and technical assistance to the regional bodies.

We anticipate that there will be additional legislation sponsored by other parties that proposed to address some of the other recommendations, and we will be supportive of those bills. SB 12 will provide staffing and expertise at the Department that will improve its ability to provide quality technical assistance to districts implementing programs made possible by related legislation.

To fund the three components of SB 12, the department is asking for \$4.3 million and can be found in the department's Policy Option Package 103, and is in the Governor's budget. In that same POP is a request for \$1.9m for the Task Force on School Safety's proposed threat assessment program.

POP 105 has a \$1m request for technical assistance to support districts using data in existing early intervention systems.

Oregon Department of Education

Together, I believe that these efforts will result in a safer, more welcoming environment for students and result in happier, safer, more successful students. I urge your support of SB 12.

I appreciate the committee's time in hearing this bill and am happy to take questions.