

Senate Bill 543 Children's School District – SUPPORT

2.14.19

SB 543 would establish a children's special district, as we have for water, parks, utilities, and even sand control, irrigation and weather modification. This allows a jurisdiction, to propose to the voters the possibility of imposing a local levy on property taxes that would be used specifically for the purposes defined in the bill for kids within that jurisdiction. Voters can vote to levy the tax or not.

This bill does not ask for any funds from the General Fund. It simply provides the legal grounds for those communities who want these kids' services to vote on a local levy.

Portland has established a special levy just for kids' programs. It was not only adopted, but after trial, voters overwhelmingly approved its continuation with 83% of the vote.

What are the arguments in favor?

1. The data is in on the **EFFECTIVENESS** of preschool, Head Start and afterschool programs in terms of student success in school, continued education, and even financial success later in life as a result. Many accomplished people have given credit to their later success due to such programs.
2. They provide **OPPORTUNITY** to kids from low income families to advance, and lowers the inequalities in access to education, because these programs start by focusing on the neediest areas, and can be paid for by a wide tax base from local citizens who see the value in supporting such programs.
3. Not only children benefit from the establishment of a children's district. Their parents and caretakers do as well. **CHILDCARE IS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR WORKING PARENTS**, especially if you're poor, and especially in rural areas. If you're a single parent, and don't have a grandparent, friend or neighbor to help you out, the possibility of working or continuing to work is at stake. Parents also need childcare to be able to get to work to pursue further education for themselves. If you're wealthy, this is not a problem. The revenue from a levy would allow childcare programs in these areas and for low income families. If you are concerned about the growing disparities between the rich and poor, this bill helps to narrow the gap. Even poor urban areas should support a children's service district because the costs are spread out over a broad base and is most needed for poor parents in rural counties.
4. **SUMMER PROGRAMS** (see *RAND study*) for kids under 18 are valuable in so many ways. As money for schools has declined in Oregon over the past decade, so too have afterschool programs and summer programs. Studies have shown that those who participate in summer school, do better in school. With our high school drop out rate, we need to address the problem where we can be most effective. These programs are known to work. Children who can't afford summer camp or summer school now lose out on these educational benefits.

Of course, not all of these programs can be financed through a special district. The five-member board will select the projects and programs that are most worthy and in need of support with the best return

on investment. These board positions most likely will be volunteers who really care about the well-being of kids. This is a bare minimum of bureaucracy. They will select wisely because they know the continuation of services depends on successful outcomes for the kids most at risk. Since money will not be coming in from the federal government, **SB 543** presents a creative solution to address the needs of kids.

[Kids' Share 2018: Report on Federal Expenditures on Children through 2017 and Future Projections](#)

reported that at the **federal** level, the investment in kids has declined, and mostly goes to children's health:

"Looking forward, children's programs are projected to receive just one cent of every dollar of the projected \$1.6 trillion increase in federal spending over the next decade.

- Under current law, the children's share of the budget is projected to drop from 9.4 percent to 6.9 percent over the next decade, as spending on Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and interest payments on the debt consume a growing share of the budget.
- By 2020, the federal government is projected to spend more on interest payments on the debt than on children.
- Over the next decade, every major category of spending on children (health, education, income security, and so on) is projected to decline relative to GDP."

Today, subsidies per child are about one-sixth the level of subsidies per senior citizen.

If we don't want a generation of kids who fail, we need to take important measures to take up the slack.

Passing **SB 543** is a creative, no-risk investment in our kids' futures. It does not compete for dollars from the General Fund or K-12 education, so needed for education and healthcare. It would help to decrease disparity and is merely an option for the communities who wish to vote in a levy to pay for these programs, and requires a minimum of government administration. Surely, if we have a service district for cemetery maintenance, we can have one for the kids when they are not in school. Most people will elect to invest in the future of our kids.

Please support **SB 543**.

Josie Koehne

Gaston, OR 97119