



**Coalition
for the
Common
Good**

Testimony to the Joint Committee On Student Success Subcommittee On Revenue

**John Russell
Russell Development Company**

Dear Co-Chair Hass, Co-Chair Nathanson and Members of the Joint Committee on Student Success Subcommittee on Revenue,

For the record, my name is John Russell, I am the founder and president of Russell Development Company.

I founded Russell Development Company in 1979. We are located in Portland, Oregon and have helped shape the skyline of the city we know and love today. We developed and are an owner of the PacWest Center and have owned the 200 Market Building for 30 years. I chose to live in Oregon because I had a sense early on that Oregonians could control their own destiny.

I am testifying today as a member of the Coalition for the Common Good because I believe Oregon's schools need \$2 billion in additional investments in order to jumpstart both our short term and long term economies. Spreadsheets can't quantify the impact of investments in education, but that doesn't diminish the impact and importance.

The status quo in our schools today is both unacceptable and untenable. In the short term, businesses rely on public schools that attract people to Oregon so we can hire well-educated, talented employees. In the long term, educating our children is vitally important. We know that - it's not a secret.

Businesses rely on Oregon's quality of life - including highly performing public schools - to attract highly skilled workers from around the world. When businesses are asked what is the biggest factor in where they decide to locate, strong public schools and universities are at the top of the list. If our goal is to create a vibrant, growing economy in Oregon - and the high paying jobs and economic opportunity that comes with it - we must begin with a fully funded education system that is something to be proud of.

We can achieve a strong public education system *and* a state where businesses can grow and thrive.

However, despite best intentions, past attempts to solve Oregon's revenue system have not resulted in solutions.

I want to address the issue of coupling PERS with this revenue conversation. As a member of the Oregon Investment Council, I understand the PERS issue and its impact. However, I have also watched state and legislative leadership grapple with the question of revenue year after year with the same result: Inaction. If businesses wanted to insist on the status quo, the proven technique is to link revenue to something else. For Oregon to finally be successful in passing revenue reform, it is my belief that we must keep the revenue conversation separate from the question of PERS.

The Coalition for the Common Good is taking an unconventional approach, bringing labor and businesses together. I stand ready alongside partners at the Coalition for the Common Good to work with the Legislature and this Committee to review, inform, and support proposals that reflect collective values, will raise at least \$2 billion to fund our public schools, can gain support among Oregon's advocates and business leaders, and are a politically viable option to both the Legislature and Oregonians.

In closing, we can see class sizes shrink so that students are getting the individual attention they need, we can see teacher aides in classrooms, we can add art, music, and P.E. to the average school day, we can add school counselors and supports, and more time in the school year. Bold investments in education will move Oregon forward in ways that can't always be quantified on a spreadsheet or in a tax model, and they will help create the vibrant, growing economy we want for our state. But we have to step forward and control our own destiny.

The time is now for bold, visionary leadership on revenue reform.

Thank you.