

March 25, 2019

Senate Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: Support for SB 282—"A bill for an act relating to use of electronic devices in classrooms; and declaring an emergency."

Dear Senator Wagner, Senator Thomsen, and Distinguished Committee Members,

Thank you for considering Senate Bill 282, "A bill for an act relating to use of electronic devices in classrooms; and declaring an emergency." We are writing to ask that you endorse this bill.

Our research explores the proliferation of digital technologies in schools. Although the use of such digital technologies may have some benefit for children's learning, these possible benefits are by no means assured to exceed those of non-digital forms of learning. As much as companies are eager to sell digital technology to schools, and schools are eager to increase children's achievement, research does not support claims that shifting to digital educational platforms achieves the desired goals. What a growing body of research does indicate, however, is that excessive computer use by children leads to several concrete negative health effects. These include vision problems, disturbance in sleep patterns, social-emotional disturbance, and addiction to digital devices.

Given these documented health risks for children, SB282 is timely and important legislation. SB 282 will ensure not only that appropriate guidelines are developed regarding the use of computers and other digital devices in school, but also that parents' efforts to protect their children's health and well-being will be accommodated by ensuring that alternative, less computer-dependent curricula will be provided to children whose parents request it, and by requiring that schools and the state Department of Education minimize the amount of data about children that they collect, store, and use. This legislation will establish Oregon as a national leader in providing safe learning environments for children and will offer model legislation for other states to follow.

With the guidelines called for by SB 282, Oregon's schools will use computers and other digital devices at a level that can contribute to children's education without threatening their physical and psychological well-being. We urge you to support SB 282.

Sincerely,
Alex Molnar
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Commercialism in Education Research Unit
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(institutional affiliation is provided for identification purposes only)

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