



March 4, 2019

Chairs Smith Warner and Roblan and members of the committee,

My name is Samantha Steele and I serve as the superintendent of the Central Point School District and as the president of the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators. Today, I am representing nearly 2,500 administrators from all parts of Oregon.

First, I want to say thank you. School administrators applaud this committee for all your work and for your willingness to engage with us. Thank you for traveling across the state, visiting our schools, and speaking with our students, teachers, and parents. The message from the education community has been clear: we need a significant investment in our public education system to improve outcomes for the children that we serve. With this proposal, we know that you heard that message loud and clear. We are genuinely excited to advocate for this measure.

We believe that the amendment is a strong start. The equity-focused \$1 billion school improvement fund could fundamentally alter the trajectory of Oregon's public education system and provide life-changing opportunities and support to students in every corner of the state. This is the kind of investment that educators have dreamed of for decades. For years, our members have walked into this building to explain to legislators the consequences of disinvesting in education: shorter school years, larger class sizes, fewer electives and enrichment opportunities, and not nearly enough staff to support the mental and behavioral health needs of our kids.

Because of the work of this committee, this session we are able to do something different. School districts from across the state have developed visions for what they could do with their share of a school improvement fund. Coos Bay could add STEM electives, summer school opportunities at all grade levels, resources for students in poverty, and social-emotional supports in every school building. Bend-La Pine would use their investment to meet Quality Education Model class sizes in K-3, create more extended-day and extended-year learning opportunities, and hire more counselors across the district. Reynolds would enhance their offerings in the fine arts, P.E., T.A.G., and library services, and hire bilingual family liaisons, educational assistants, teachers, and counselors. In Central Point, we could add school days, provide more elective opportunities, and enhance our core curriculum with STEAM and CTE offerings. All of this is just the beginning. With your support, we could make this a reality.

There is one urgent need in Oregon's education system that this package does not address. We urge you to include funding to develop and expand "Grow Your Own" workforce development programs in the Committee's package. Nearly one third of our current educator workforce is eligible to retire, and there are not sufficient people entering the field to replace them. Moreover, our student population is becoming increasingly diverse culturally and linguistically and our education workforce does not reflect that diversity. We know that "Grow Your Own" programs are effective ways to address these challenges because districts across the state are already utilizing them with the resources they can cobble together at the local level. But, to make

progress in a comprehensive way, we need an investment from the state. We believe that House Bill 2742, with a \$16.7 million investment, is the right model to achieve this.

Additionally, COSA urges the committee to include Education Service Districts (ESDs) in the distribution of school improvement fund dollars. ESDs are a critical component of Oregon's education system. They provide a wide range of services to our school districts, including special education, early learning, technology, school safety, and other administrative services. ESDs help keep costs down for school districts and are especially key for small and rural schools. Without the assistance of ESDs, many schools would be unable to provide critical student supports. Many of our smaller schools are interested in pooling their school improvement fund resources to maximize the impact on students, but that will require greater capacity from ESDs. Please restore funding for ESDs in your proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Best,

Samantha Steele
Superintendent, Central Point School District
President, Confederation of Oregon School Administrators