

Testimony by Lynn Youngbar to the Joint Committee on Student Success—Public Hearing, April 11, 2019, 5 PM. Concerning the Student Success Act

Co Chairs Roblan and Smith-Warner, Members of the Committee,

My name is Lynn Youngbar. I'm a lifelong resident of Oregon and currently part of the leadership team of a grassroots organization, One Small Thing PDX, (OSTPDX) in Portland developing a large cadre of activists working to rebuild a fair, just and equitable democracy in Oregon. We have over 500 members and work with a statewide coalition of groups with common values and interests.

We commend you for the first draft of the Student Success Act to rebuild the public education system in Oregon. You've addressed many of our highest priorities—class size, mental health resources and restoring art, music, physical education and vocational prep. And critically important is the Early Childhood Education Resources. Three of my grandchildren are in Portland Public Schools and because their parents can afford it, they have been taking art, music, and sports outside of the school day. But shouldn't all students have access to these opportunities and within the school day?

Currently, at their school there is a ½ time art teacher for over 600 students and each child only has one period of art class every other week. There is strong evidence that arts educational experiences can produce significant positive impacts on academic and social development. Because schools play a pivotal role in cultivating the next generation of citizens and leaders, it is imperative that we reflect on the fundamental purpose of a well-rounded education. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2019/02/12/new-evidence-of-the-benefits-of-arts-education/>

All three of my grandchildren have had to hire private tutors for their dyslexia and reading issues---yes all three have reading disabilities in one form or another. They participate in the school based resources and two have IEP (individual development plans), but they are completely inadequate. Their elementary school has one special education teacher to cover learning disabilities and other educational issues for 625 students.

And what happens to the children whose parents don't have the money and the time to pursue the learning resources their children need? They get ever further behind. More and more children have reading/learning disabilities. If we leave this problem unaddressed, our future workforce and the happiness of our population will be at stake. So please add more money into your budget to ensure that children with learning disabilities are getting the help they desperately need to succeed and early enough to make a difference and that all children have access to a robust arts education.

I would like to take a final moment to address what I think is as important as funding our schools: Where will the new revenue come from? We need over 2 billion this biennium but with burgeoning PERS costs and even more resources needed to rebuild school programs and social services in the future, we must find new revenue. The following principles have been developed by the Revenue Roundtable and endorsed by our group, One Small Thing PDX. When considering new revenue sources, it must be:

- **Progressive:** Tax policies should ensure Oregonians with more income and wealth contribute a larger share of their resources to support the common good than those with less.
- **Adequate:** Tax and revenue policies must raise enough revenue to fund the public structures that create opportunity for all Oregonians.
- **Equitable:** As in many other areas of public policy, tax policy has fostered inequitable outcomes based on race, ethnicity, and gender. New policies should remove these barriers and inequities and advance Oregonians' economic opportunity.
- **Viable:** The policy must have a viable path towards enactment in the legislature and be defensible at the ballot.

OSTPDX believes that we really need a major restructuring of our revenue resources in Oregon in the coming years. There are growing numbers of people throughout the state that recognize that our income tax is not progressive enough to help lower income people, our property tax system needs restructuring to be equitable and fair and we need to increase the corporate income tax, restructure the kicker and add some kind of consumption tax. We recognize these are long term changes that may require constitutional amendments, but we are here for the long term. In the meantime, we support many of the current proposals to increase the corporate income tax and closing loopholes.

The CAT and MCAT that you have proposed are a good start on developing a consumption tax of some sort, but you must take steps to make it more progressive and assure citizens of Oregon that you will not tax food and some other basic necessities. We would not support a reduction in the income tax as an offset to a consumption tax. This would likely benefit those higher income earners since personal income tax rate cuts mainly flow to the higher income households. Taxpayers in the top 10% will get the biggest dollar tax cut, while those in the bottom 20% will barely see any boost. It doesn't make sense to us that giving with one hand and taking away with another will provide the resources we really need to improve our public schools and necessary social services that have experienced extreme service cuts for years. We need new sources of revenue not a substitution of one source for another.

In closing I would like to thank the entire committee, the legislative staff and members of the Revenue Roundtable and Invest in Oregon for starting to engage Oregon's citizens in the complex but important discussion about revenue. Now it's time for all of us to step up and say I am willing to pay more taxes to provide the funding this state needs to provide the public services our citizens deserve.

Thank you, Lynn Youngbar