

Testimony to the Oregon House Revenue Committee

In Support of Senate Bill 543

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The Children's Funding Project (CFP) is providing this testimony in support of Oregon Senate Bill 543. The Children's Funding Project is a national non-profit organization that helps communities close equity and opportunity gaps for children and youth through comprehensive, strategic financing.

The Children's Funding Project has studied the creation and implementation of local public dedicated children's funds and believes that this is a critical mechanism to ensure sustainability of youth programs and services that would benefit Oregon children because:

1. 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) are the largest federal funding source for afterschool programming and provide a myriad of programs for academic enrichment, drug and violence prevention, STEM, music and arts, nutrition and physical health, and more. Funding for 21st CCLC and other federal programs that support child and youth development are at high risk for cuts or stagnation. Communities need to be able to maintain the programs and services they have worked so hard to put in place through sustainable funding.
2. Of the approximately 36,000 special taxing districts in the United States dedicated to funding airports, sewage, stadiums, etc., only nine of those taxing districts are explicitly for children's services. These nine districts are in Florida, where state enabling legislation similar to SB 543 allows voters to establish children's special taxing districts known as Children's Services Councils (CSCs). Other states across the country are considering adoption of this model, and on April 3, 2019, Colorado's Governor signed HB19-1052 into law, enabling Colorado communities to create special taxing districts to fund early childhood services and supports. Enabling this kind of local generation of sustainable resources allows localities to innovate, protect, and enhance the lives of their children and families.
3. Special taxing districts have a history of demonstrated success in sustainably financing child and youth services that improve community-wide outcomes. For example, the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County in 2018 provided maternal health programs to more than 30,000 families, childcare and afterschool assistance to more than 40,000 children, and quality improvement services to hundreds of programs. A decrease in the number of infants with low birth weights; a twenty-year low in the teen birth rate; and marked improvements in kindergarten readiness are just a few of the fund's successes, and in 2014 voters reauthorized the Palm Beach CSC with 84.96% support.
4. We track the growing movement of localities generating dedicated funding to support child and youth focused programs and services outside of the school day. Currently more than three dozen communities have established these kinds of "children's funds." In 2018 alone, new funding was dedicated to child and youth services in Memphis, TN, Buncombe County, NC, San Francisco, CA, Yolo County, CA, Richmond, CA, Kent County, MI, and Alachua County, Florida.
5. There is already evidence that such a fund could be successful in Oregon. The Portland Children's Levy generates about \$19 million per year (2018-19) to finance programs for at-risk and low-income youth and is considered a national model for local dedicated funding.

The timing is right in Oregon to codify into law the ability of local voters to authorize special taxing districts dedicated to the financing of youth services and we fully support this effort. Passing SB 543 would position Oregon as an early adopter of a compelling strategy.

Thank you for considering this important piece of legislation to support local communities and the success of their children and youth. As you move forward the Children's Funding Project would be happy to be of assistance and answer any questions about this movement around the country. For more information on the Children's Funding Project visit:

<https://www.childrensproject.org/>