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Portland, OR 97231  
April 23, 2019

To the members of the House Committee On Human Services and Housing:

I write in support of SB 543, to authorize the formation of children's service districts. You will have testimony regarding the studies supporting the academic and social benefits of the programs for the children. Let us also bear in mind the benefits to the community as a whole.

I recently listened to a podcast featuring University of Chicago professor and economist Raghuram Rajan, in which he spoke of the "three pillars" of society: the state, the economy, and the community. His focus was on the contributions a vibrant local community offers to an economy.

Mr. Rajan's observations resonated with me. In Oregon, as in so most states, we have come to be in a difficult economic situation (apparently without the will or power to actually fix it in the near future). One consequence is that our lives are increasingly determined at the statewide level, including how our school days and calendar are set.

In this current situation our personal lives and those of our children can be fractured and isolated. Senate Bill 543 gives a community the opportunity to choose to offer or bolster beneficial alternatives to isolation outside of the school day. It offers resources to help children find fulfillment and joy in participating with each other, to further develop their roles as citizens. Children and youth can be offered opportunities for leadership, respect for different perspectives, and collaboration skills when they spend time in play and creative work with others, and those skills are carried into adult citizenship. Ultimately we will see those values come together toward the society to which we aspire.

Give us the right to determine positive societal structures that are best for our local communities. Pass SB 543, please.

Maureen Barnhart  
Retired Educator