

April 23, 2019

Hello Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Alonso León and Helt, Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Tricia Snyder, and I am the Teacher-Librarian at Reynolds Middle School in the Reynolds School District in East Multnomah County. I have worked for the district for 20 year and have seen the negative effects of cuts to our school libraries. I am also a member of the Oregon Association of School Libraries Advocacy Committee, which was formed in order to help gain restoration of strong school libraries in Oregon.

Our school libraries are in crisis. When cuts to school libraries first came, many couldn't believe that schools would make cuts to the heart of the school, let alone that it would be permanent. The certified and classified staff that were left, work valiantly to keep libraries open and running as best they can, but cuts continue and service erodes and disintegrates as people burn out as a library takes a lot of work to maintain. The research data our committee has collected over the past year, which includes our OASL school library survey, looking at school compliance reports, and QEM data support this drastic loss, and we are happy to share our data with you.

Over the years, school library programs have not been restored whereas other programs have or other programs have been created and funded, but the cuts to school libraries have gotten much worse as we have seen our state go from over 800 certified librarians to just around 150. Many of those 150 do not even work directly at a school site, but are instead a district librarian that tries to manage all of the school libraries in their district. Book and materials budgets are also varied which leads to inequity and aging of collections. This lack of investment leads some to believe school libraries are good enough or not effective, and because this has gone on for so long, our current staffing model and practice had devolved into a terrible new norm. This is unsustainable and unacceptable. The next step Oregon will likely see are libraries closing as we have already seen happen in some districts.

Cuts have primarily been to certified/licensed school librarians due to cost savings, but what has been lost is one of the best bargains a school can have. A school librarian does more than just check out books, they are an instructional leader in the school with a big picture vision of all grades and departments. They are not only experts in literature and literacy trends, but also library orientation, digital citizenship, and information and research skills. Many schools are currently just keeping libraries open, but the instructional opportunities are being lost.

In addition libraries offer a welcoming open space for all to support inquiry, collaboration, love of reading, and a safe space. We support quality instruction, mental health, literacy, equity, and cultural responsiveness. A restoration of certified school librarians to our school site who partner with a library assistant will bring these services

and instruction to every student and staff member in the state of Oregon. This is an excellent return on investment that will put Oregon back on track to increased graduation rates, improved attendance rates, added instructional minutes, and improved reading skills.

Our research as a committee shows that there are OARs that expect Oregon schools to have strong school library media programs with certified school librarians delivering instruction. However, there are no real accountability measures or standards in place that ensure that each child receives this service and instruction K-12. We have found that district self-report Division 22 compliance and there are no parameters or guidelines as to what compliance really means which has led to a wide variety of models in our state that, in truth, should be labeled as non-compliant as instruction is often not happening at most or school libraries, and if it is, it is not by a certified school librarian on site.

Much of the burden has been put on our classified staff who are not trained for the teaching and classroom management skills a certified librarian is expected to have and provide. Our library assistants are a valuable part of keeping a school library strong, but each school really needs a team of both certified and classified on site to provide the true intention of the OARs as well as the State Board adopted standards for library media.

To reinvest to full programming per the QEM and to regain what we have lost over the last two decades, we estimate that our school libraries need \$100 million for staff and resources. To put this in perspective, this is only 5 percent of the 2 billion dollar budget put out by the JCOSS. We recognize that this couldn't happen overnight as reinvestment will take time, but we need to act sooner than later as it will take time to recruit staff, and hopefully stave off cuts to the only library endorsement left in our state at Portland State University.

We need a solution that will bring strong school libraries back to Oregon with accountability measures in place. HB 3263 was created to help bring clarifying language to districts so they knew what was needed for a strong school library program based on the District Continuous Improvement Plan which included instruction taught by a licensed school librarian (library media specialist) on site, and the inclusion of state adopted library media standards was added to a student's comprehensive education in order to ensure students were consistently receiving this instruction. We have left reinvestment to local control, and it hasn't happened due to competing interests and needs based on budget constraints. We are looking to your expertise to help us find a solution that will restore strong school libraries to all of our students and staff in this state in an expedient manner.

Thank you,
Tricia Snyder

Troutdale, OR