

To Chairman Doherty and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Rita Ramstad, and I am writing to present testimony for an informational hearing on HB 3263. I am writing to you as the District Media Coordinator for Centennial School District, as well as a board member of the Oregon Association of School Libraries and a member of its Advocacy Committee. I am also writing to you as citizen of Oregon and a parent of children who attended Oregon public schools for their K-12 education.

I have been the district media coordinator for Centennial since 2013. We are a diverse, high-poverty district of 10 schools K-12, with just over 6,000 students. My half-time position gives me 2 hours per week per school to attend to ensuring compliance with all of the requirements of [OAR 581-022-2340](#), which includes providing a K-12 instructional library program. As the only licensed and library-media endorsed staff working in our libraries, that gives me a student:teacher ratio of more than 12,000:1. I am assisted in this by one classified staff person in each school. To convey the impact of our staffing resources, I want to share what this looks like in our elementary schools.

In our elementary schools, teachers drop their entire class off at the library with our classified assistants, who then supervise them alone for a minimum of 25 minutes. Teachers do not stay because it is their prep time. Our assistants are responsible for supervising behaviors and checking out books. They are usually the only adults in the room (special education EAs are often assigned to other students during library because it is not considered academic time), dealing with all the same issues that have resulted in the disrupted learning environments that the JCROSS learned so much about in their listening sessions last fall. Although library assistants have to function largely like our licensed PE and music teachers (whose classes also provide prep time), they have not had the same training. Because they also have a short work day (6 hours), they are often not included in staff meetings that provide professional development and support for implementing school-wide behavior support systems.



In an attempt to advocate for the resources we need, I (along with members of the OASL Advocacy Committee) reached out to ODE and combed through the OARs and ORSs, looking for clear guidance. We found vague descriptors and loopholes, and we were told that the OARs

are purposely written with broad language so that districts can have freedom to implement them in ways they deem best.

“How can this model even be legal?” is a question I’ve been asking for five years. We are not providing the kind of instruction mandated in [OAR 581-022-2340](#), [OAR 581-021-0200](#), and [OAR 581-022-2030](#), and if we were it would not be provided by a licensed and appropriately endorsed teacher, which is required by [OAR 584-220-0145](#) and [OAR 584-420-0415](#). We feel this model is a violation also of [OAR 581-037-0015](#), which defines the role of instructional assistants, which is the one our library assistants play when they are asked to provide instruction, which is happening more and more. We have learned, however, that there is little we can do about lack of compliance. We would have to go through a lengthy complaint process, which I cannot even initiate in my district because I am not a parent, student, or resident of the district, which my district’s board policy requires for initiating a complaint about lack of compliance with state rules and statutes.

Given these realities, our OASL Advocacy Committee determined that our only real option was to add clarity to existing OARs and the district Continuous Improvement statute ([ORS 329.095](#)), which resulted in HB 3263. As you know, our bill never even made it to a hearing within your committee. We were told that its long-term financial implications made it untenable at this time. With respect for the very difficult jobs you all have to do, I want to state how frustrating and discouraging this message was to receive. If we cannot make these modest changes now, I honestly don’t know when we can expect things to improve for our students.

I am approaching the end of my career, which may come sooner than I once hoped, simply because--like the employees I am tasked with supporting--the stress of what we are asked to do is becoming too much. Increasingly, I cannot stomach the role I play in perpetuating what feels like a sham. I have tried everything I know to create positive learning for our students in their libraries using the resources we have, but I cannot bring us into anything close to compliance with the time, budget, and personnel that we have. Increasingly, I wonder if my efforts to hold things together--pushing both myself and my library assistants to the edge of our limits--actually does students a disservice because it masks the true state of their education. We are not where we are because anyone is lazy, corrupt, or uncaring. It is simply what happens when our systems are as over-taxed and under-resourced as we have been for decades. I feel as if we have lost sight, in our state, of what the function of a public education system is. Our job is to educate, but because other social support systems have also been over-taxed and under-resourced, we are increasingly called upon to be all things to all children. As a result, we are not giving today’s children the things we once accepted as basic parts of all schools: librarians, nurses, music and art programs, and extra-curricular activities that all students can participate in without paying extra fees. Children in some communities still get many of these things, but the children in my poor and racially diverse school community do not. After working through nearly 30 years of budget cuts and layoffs and mandates we cannot meet, I am losing faith that anything is ever going to change or that education can be the equalizer of opportunity I have long believed it to be.

Laws and Administrative Rules Pertaining to School Library Programs

[ORS 329.095](#) (CIP statute)

Requires that districts update improvement plans biennially and that those plans must include goals to implement “strong school library programs.”

[OAR 581-022-2550](#) defines “strong school library programs” as this term relates to district improvement plans, which includes requirements for instruction, reading development, collaboration, equitable access to resources and “licensed librarians,” collection development.

[OAR 581-022-2340](#) describes standards for elementary and secondary school media programs, which includes instruction in locating and retrieving organized print and non-print media; using media to record and express ideas and knowledge; and listening to, viewing, interpreting, and analyzing media materials. It also describes standards for staffing, facilities, and materials.

[OAR 581-021-0200](#) establishes that library media skills instruction are part of standard education for Oregon students.

[OAR 581-022-2030](#) describes district curriculum requirements, which includes a planned K-12 instructional program in areas identified in chapter 581, Division 22 of the OARs, which includes media programs.

[OAR 584-220-0145](#) establishes requirements for Library Media endorsements and the requirement that “an educator is not authorized to teach in the endorsed area unless and until the endorsement is officially added to the license.”

[OAR 584-420-0415](#) lists the competencies educators must demonstrate to be granted an endorsement in library media.

[OAR 581-037-0015](#) describes the role of educational assistants, which can include “Media center or computer laboratory **support**,” (emphasis added) but is not to include planning the instructional activities or evaluating student achievement, duties which are assigned to the assigned teacher or administrator who provides a “supervision plan that includes regular monitoring of the educational assistant’s effectiveness and access to assistance and consultation.”