

February 4, 2020

Dear Chair Wagner and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

The Eugene 4J School Board would like to express our support for some of the proposed changes in SB 1572, but not all. We are in support of eliminating the Essential Skills Test requirement for graduation. This is the top legislative priority for our School Board and it is part of our broader goal of reducing the amount of unnecessary testing our students have each year. Eliminating the Essential Skills Test is an important step towards accomplishing this goal. We feel that when students successfully complete the 24 required credits for graduation, they have earned the right to graduate from high school with a diploma. We are concerned that the additional graduation requirement of passing a skills test has contributed to some students' decision to drop out of school, especially students who are English Language Learners, low income, and students of color. In addition, staff spend an excessive amount of time working with struggling students to help them pass these tests. This takes school counselors and teaching staff away from performing other important duties such as instruction, counseling, and advising.

However, at this time we cannot support the proposed changes in SB 1572 related to requiring local school districts rather than the State Board of Education to determine what meets the established subject-matter credit requirements that students must satisfy in order to receive a high school diploma. School districts and other education leaders have not had time to consider the full impact this would have on local school districts and the potential intended and unintended consequences for students. For example, we need to understand the impact this might have on the value of an Oregon high school diploma, the impact on students who transfer between school districts, the impact on marginalized populations, and the impact on the admittance of Oregon's students colleges and universities.

In summary, we support and encourage the elimination of the Essential Skills Test as an additional requirement to graduation. We do not support having each local school district establish subject-matter credit requirements that students must satisfy in order to receive an Oregon high school diploma.

Thank you for your time. Please reach out to us with any questions.
The Eugene 4J School Board