

Greetings committee members of the Joint Committee for the Second Special Session:

Please consider our testimony for education equity and priority spending as you make your final decisions for closing your 1.2 billion hole in the state budget. We are a culturally specific organization run by Latinos/as/x and working with thousands of Latino/a/x families in the Salem Keizer School District and Marion County. Our area has a major impact on the success of Oregon's K-12 education, AND on Oregon's economy. We have nearly 25% of all the Latino children in the state!

Covid-19 has impacted a larger number of Latino/a/x families than any other group in our area. Many have continued to work and are threatened with losing their jobs if they stay home for safety or complain about safety conditions. Hundreds upon hundreds of children were unable to complete their schoolwork by June because of babysitters and technology struggles.

We can't move forward with any success if we do not address the disparities already present by addressing the greater disparities that have appeared during this crisis. The heart of the Student Success Act is Equitable Education. Now, with this crisis, it is more imperative than ever before, and it must expand to include interventions to aid the technology divide.

No matter what is happening in our world, we must not retreat to past comfort levels. Keep that in mind with every decision you have to make this week. The most important things that are going to help Oregon shine are:

1. Early Learning: What the Hubs have accomplished with the Preschool Promise and other funding is nothing short of a miracle in Marion and Polk Counties. This is a KEY to Oregon's Future Success by every measure.

2. The Student Investment Accounts: all the energy and research and time put into these taught us all something critical about community voice. Districts responded with significant plans and reforms that held a great deal of promise. Prioritize that funding stream!
3. Educator Advancement: You know highly qualified teachers are a must. It cannot be overstated that increasing teachers who represent their students has a direct correlation to school success. Oregon's Educator Council has worked long and hard on solutions. DON'T let the momentum stop!
4. Mental Health, Restorative Justice, Discipline Disparities--all of these are related and exacerbated during traumatic times. Keep the pressure on for reforms in these areas.

And finally, don't for a moment forget the current issues that are facing us with race relations in our state and country. No amount of money should take precedence over that issue and it must stay at the top of all of our priority lists in everything we do. Use that Equity Lens to help you make every decision. We know you face a very difficult task and trust that you have the children's best interest in mind.

Thank you,

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