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Re: Urging Support for LC21: Temporary COVID-19 Liability Protection for School Districts

Co-Chair Courtney, Co-Chair Kotek, and members of the Joint Interim Committee on the Thirds Special Session:

The Beaverton School District's highest priority is the safe and effective education of our students. We are committed to innovation and excellence in the education we deliver and build everything from a foundation of equity. This pandemic has been a challenge to navigate for students, families, staff, and the community; however, when considering how we will educate students in classrooms when they return we are relying on the guidance and direction from the Department of Education, the Oregon Health Authority, and our local community health department. All are partners in ensuring safe, equitable, and effective access to education for our students.

With the COVID-19 pandemic extending into the second half of the school year some realities have set in for the district. One of those realities is that our liability insurance will not cover any expenses related to COVID-19 claims. If the district follows the direction of ODE, OHA, and county health and reopens within those frameworks it should be protected from damages related to COVID-19 claims, and LC 21 provides that protection. If we are going to open schools, it is with this protection that we will be able to make it happen.

To be clear, LC21 does not provide unlimited or full immunity from claims. Districts that act with negligence or act irresponsibly would still be subject to claims; however, when a district follows the emergency guidance from the state and applicable safety rules for opening, liability protections would be afforded them.

LC 21 provides the support and protection that schools need to safely reopen. It provides an incentive to following state guidance that is science based. It allows districts to eventually fulfill our goal of safely bringing students and educators back into the classrooms.

The Beaverton School District strongly urges your support for LC21.

District Goal: WE empower all students to achieve post-high school success.

The District prohibits discrimination and harassment based on any basis protected by law, including but not limited to, an individual's actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national or ethnic origin, marital status, age, mental or physical disability, pregnancy, familial status, economic status, veterans' status, or because of a perceived or actual association with any other persons within these protected classes.