

To: Chair Senator Dembrow, Vice Chair Senator Thomsen, and Committee Members,
Gelser, Gorsek and Robinson

I am writing in support of SB 744 "Eliminating Oregon's Graduation Barrier".

First, let's put this in a national context. These are the facts:

Oregon is one of only eleven U.S. states that has retained a testing requirement for graduation.
Seven states have granted retroactive high school diplomas to students who were denied them based on test scores.
In recent years, eighteen states have ended such testing requirements.

Then there are the unintended consequences. These are the facts:

High stakes testing requirements force teachers to teach to the test, rather than engaging students in authentic and meaningful learning.

Many studies show that such requirements do nothing to raise achievement, improve employment prospects or ensure college success.

And there are important social consequences that must be considered, especially in 2021.

High stakes testing requirements increase the overall dropout rate, and the increase is disproportionately among low-income students, English language learners and students of color.

These tests take an inordinate amount of school counselor time away from counseling by necessitating unnecessary testing coordination.

It is time to reconsider the effects of legislation that, while well intended, has led to a situation where Oregon has some of the most rigorous diploma requirements in the U.S., while at the same time having one of the lowest completion rates. This is unjust and wrong. We can do better.

Sincerely,
Mark S Fischer
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