



COLUMBIA REGIONAL PROGRAM

*Our Services: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Blind/Visually Impaired,
Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Deafblind, Orthopedic Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury*

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March 18, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the House Committee on Education:

HB 3183 requires a representative of the School for the Deaf to attend IEP/IFSP meetings for all students who are eligible for services as a deaf or hard of hearing child. We believe this bill will create an undue burden for school districts and families in coordinating IEP/IFSP meetings, is unnecessary and is an inefficient use of funds as there is already representation for the continuum of placements for all special education students.

Unnecessary and Inefficient use of Funds

Children who are deaf or hard of hearing have a wide spectrum of needs. The majority of deaf and hard of hearing students access their education and daily lives in their neighborhood schools and communities using listening and speech. Students have access to assistive technology and appropriate instruction through their school districts and Regional Inclusive Services (RIS formerly known as Regional Programs) which employ licensed Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing provide services and support educational needs as a result of hearing loss in the students' neighborhood school and home communities. In Oregon, there are over 1500 children who are deaf or hard of hearing, approximately 10% of those students use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language. Of those students, they attend preschool and elementary school in special focus classrooms in their communities that are staffed by teachers of the deaf or hard of hearing who are fluent in ASL. While families are informed of the School for the Deaf at IFSP/IEP meetings, families with young children are reluctant to place their children in a residential placement. Most families see their neighborhood school as the preferred placement for their children with hearing loss.

The IFSP/IEP teams are required by law to discuss the continuum of placements for all students eligible for special education. The continuum must include the least to most restrictive placements, restrictive placements, as defined by IDEA, are those most removed from the general education classroom. Per IDEA, a segregated school is the most restrictive placement due to lack of access to the general education classroom. Educational placement determinations are based on child progress data, goals, and family input. Where a student's needs can be met in the least restrictive environment is determined by the IEP team including a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing who is knowledgeable about the impact of hearing loss. To be clear, for some students, the Oregon School for the Deaf is the least restrictive placement due to their educational needs. When this option is considered, OSD is already included in the IEP meetings.

Burden for School Districts and Families

The premise of the bill is that families are not informed about the option of the Oregon School for the Deaf resulting in low enrollment at the school. The reality, however, is that families and students do know about the school but the majority of families want their children to attend their neighborhood school. Requiring the School for the Deaf at all meetings, regardless of the

consideration of the IEP team, will create an undue burden for scheduling and in some cases will violate IDEA if families do not want to consider such a placement.

While we support the Oregon School for the Deaf, we respectfully request that this bill not move forward. We believe this bill will create an undue burden for school districts and families in coordinating IEP/IFSP meetings, is unnecessary and is an inefficient use of funds as there is already representation for the continuum of placements for all special education students.

Sincerely,

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