

Testimony of Dan Saltzman in support of SB299

February 4, 2021

Oregon Senate Revenue & Finance Committee

Dear Chair Burdick; Senators Boquist, Findley, Wagner, and Riley

Portland voters first approved the Portland Children's Levy in 2002. It is a five-year local option property tax that voters have overwhelmingly renewed three times to date. Pure and simple, voters decided to make children a higher priority by investing in proven programs to make kids safe and successful.

The Portland Levy invests from \$10 to \$ 20 million dollars each year. Investments are made in programs with a proven track record in order to expand their capacity to serve more children. Its administrative costs are capped at 5%. The categories of investment are early childhood education; after school and mentoring services; child abuse prevention and intervention programs; programs to help foster kids succeed; and hunger programs.

Just as Portlanders have stepped up, voters elsewhere should have an option to consider formation of a Children's Service District as proposed in Senate Bill 299. It is hard to imagine why giving local voters an option to make children a higher priority should not be permitted. Yet, without SB 299 that unfortunately is the case.

SB 299 gives voters a choice to focus investments in children, no more, no less. Creating such districts under SB 299 is still a daunting challenge – requiring at least two separate votes by residents.

I urge the committee to approve this important legislation.

Thank you.

Dan Saltzman