

I'm writing to request you pass SB299, so that the Senate may vote on its passage.

As Committee members are aware, SB299 authorizes the formation of children's service districts throughout Oregon. SB299 further authorizes such children's service districts to levy property taxes to fund programs that support children's total health and wellbeing outside of school hours.

I support the passage of SB299 for these four reasons:

1: Children with access to programs outside of school hours are more likely to grow into successful, productive, well-adjusted adults. In many communities, however, such programs are (a) non-existent, (b) under-funded, (c) over-capacity, and/or (d) simply beyond the financial means of many parents. This is also the case for Washington County.

2: Working parents whose children are in quality, affordable, and accessible out-of-school-time programs require less time off from work to get their children to and from programs. They're more productive at work when they don't have to scramble to find programs, balance schedules, and worry about their children being unsupervised for long periods of time.

3: Passage of SB299 would be an invaluable mechanism for local communities to provide sustainable funding for early childhood, after school, and summer programs that (a) help prevent child abuse, (b) assure high-quality early childhood programs, (c) offer nutritious meals outside the home, (d) provide opportunities to receive mentoring, and (e) support the success of all children—regardless of their financial means, culture, faith, or socioeconomic position.

4.: Consistent and stable funding could allow the people who are employed by youth-serving nonprofits to earn a living wage and benefits, such as health insurance. This would help solve the chronic retention problems that plague these organizations, as well as offer employment stability and improve overall quality of the programs.

Ultimately, the passage of SB299 would allow communities throughout Oregon to ensure more children and their families get the opportunity to build a brighter future and escape from the cycle of poverty. I urge you to pass SB299, now. Today. It is much needed.

Most Sincerely,
Mandi Middlestetter
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