



February 5, 2021

Susan Bender Phelps  
President, Friends of Washington County Kids  
Owner, Odyssey Mentoring, Corporate Training  
1855 NW Albion Court  
Beaverton, OR 97006

RE: Support for SB299

Dear Chair Ginny Burdick, Senators Boquist, Findlay, Riley, and Wagner,

Our organization supports Washington County Kids, a collaborative of over 140 individuals and organizations dedicated to increasing access to out of school time (early childhood, after school, and summer) programs, and really, all Oregon kids, we urge you to support the passage of SB299 to authorize the creation of children's service districts to levy property taxes to fund programs that provide affordable and accessible out-of-school-time programs: childcare before and after-school, early learning, summer and enrichment programs.

Here are the reasons I support SB299:

1. Children with access to programs outside of school hours grow into successful, productive, well-adjusted, adults and are contributors to our societal good. In many communities throughout Oregon, such programs are a) non-existent b) underfunded, c) overcapacity, and/or d) simply beyond the financial means of many parents. This is true in Washington County where I have lived for more than 20 years.
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 are more productive at work when they don't have to scramble to find programs, balance schedules, and worry that their children are 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) 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, or ethnicity.
4. Consistent and stable funding would allow the people who are employed by youth serving nonprofits to earn a living wage and benefits like health insurance. This would solve the chronic retention problems that plague these organizations. Adequate funding would allow providers to offer employment stability and improve the overall quality of these already excellent programs.
5. Passage of SB299 will be budget-neutral for the state of Oregon. Special districts will only be created if voters and community groups want them. Once created, voters will choose how much they want to invest in their children's futures.

I believe the passage of SP 299 will allow communities throughout Oregon to ensure that more children and their families get the opportunity to build a brighter future and escape the cycle of poverty. I urge you to pass SB 299 out of your committee and to vote for it when it goes before the full house.

Sincerely,

Susan Bender Phelps  
503-890-0971  
president@WashcoKidsFund.com