



Date: April 30, 2021
To: House Rules Committee, Chair Smith Warner and Members
From: Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations
RE: *HB 2060 [Student Success Act changes]*

On behalf of OEA's 41,000 members, it is my honor to submit testimony regarding the bill before you, which asks you to consider changing several provisions of the landmark Student Success Act of 2019.

As a person who worked to create and pass the language incorporated in this new game-changing education grant, I offer our association's view of the various elements of HB 2060 – most of which we support, but with a notable exception. I will take each content area separately below:

Nutrition Access: Clarification

HB 2060 corrects some of the technical issues with school nutrition, but it does not address one unintended problem: that districts be required to opt in rather than out of the no-cost school meal program guaranteed in the SSA. That remedy, found in HB 2536, does clarify that our students who qualify for meal access are more likely to receive them. We see this bill and the other, which has already passed the House unanimously, as companions in the fine-tuning of the benefit found in the Student Success Act's guarantee that all students whose households are at or under the 300% of the Federal Poverty Level mark are able to access school meals.

Mental and Behavioral Health Targets: Concerns

In drafting the language that would become a part of HB 3427 – the Student Success Act – a team of education advocates debated long and hard about the need for grantee accountability and how best to determine whether districts had invested their share of the resource in the priorities they outlined in their grant applications. A mix of statewide and local metrics were allowed, to demonstrate fidelity to their grant proposals as it relates to helping our most marginalized students achieve. We knew that some of the uses of the grant funds would not be so easily measurable, so we left to districts the ability to demonstrate that they had used their money wisely and well, to good effect in those areas. Our team deliberately did not attempt to second-guess the kinds of evidence a district may offer to reflect that their mental and behavioral health investments had yielded results.

There are several reasons for this. In the case of student mental health, there are no easy metrics that directly correspond to the efficacy and fidelity of mental health service provision in schools. There are student privacy issues in the health-care realm that are further impediments. Test results and other regularly collected academic data points are irrelevant to this investment area. If a district's grant application proposes to use a portion of the resource to hire a school counselor, social worker, or school nurse, for instance, demonstration that the money went to do just that should be evidence enough that the grant terms were met. Outcome "targets" may not be easily demonstrated in a way that verifies accountability to the non-linear work of addressing student mental health concerns. We understand, based on testimony provided in the House Education Committee on this point, that the voluntary metrics suggested will be in the form of surveys of climate and the like, and not mandatory "performance" data that has the flavor of the old shame and blame scheme of the No-child-left-behind style of "accountability". Though we sought an amendment to clarify how this section would be operationalized, we are hopeful that the Department will seek the input of school mental health

providers (school counselors, psychologists, nurses, and social workers) to fine-tune their advice on this work, so that it is input-based rather than outcomes-driven.

School for the Deaf and Juvenile Education Programs added: Support

In 2019, we proposed the addition of the School for the Deaf and education programs serving adjudicated youth. We are happy to see these students added to the Student Investment Account. Though their addition lessens the per-student funding for all eligible public education entities who may apply for SIA grants, we believe this to be a fairness matter and support the change.

State-sponsored Charter Schools: Support with Clarification

Our work to carefully prioritize resources for our historically marginalized student populations applies to the charter school realm as well. We agreed that only those charter schools that served large numbers of “Focal Group” students – a rarity among Oregon’s 127 charter schools – would be entitled to access as independent entities applying for SIA grants. At this writing, just a few districts meet that standard, but one of them, a state-sponsored charter, is unable to access the funds because of an unintentional drafting decision that failed to capture our original intent. We support the fix, as long as the record is clear that a state-sponsored charter school must still meet the demographic criteria set forth in the Student Success Act in order to qualify as an independent grant applicant.

We also support the two new provisions recommended in the Dash 2 and Dash 3 amendments to this bill.

Thank you so much for your consideration of these points.