

May 4, 2021

Oregon House General Government Committee

Dear Chair Wilde, Vice Chairs Leif and Lively, and Representatives Valderama and Zika,

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, other voters 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.

Sincerely,

Dan Saltzman