

May 13, 2021



Chair Teresa Alonso Leon
Vice-Chair Courtney Neron
Vice-Chair Suzanne Weber
Members of the House Education Committee

RE: SB 744 A – Relating to High School Diploma Requirements and Essential Skills

Dear Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chair Neron, Vice Chair Weber and members of the House Education Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective on SB 744 A, which establishes a process to review Oregon’s high school graduation requirements.

I am supportive of an equity-focused, comprehensive review of Oregon’s graduation requirements as outlined in SB 744 A. Now more than ever, it is critical to ensure that our state’s diploma requirements prepare all learners for success after graduation.

However, I am opposed to the provision in the bill that indefinitely removes the authority of the State Board of Education to implement any future demonstration of proficiency through Essential Skills.

I was a member of the State Board of Education when the Essential Skills were adopted. The Essential Skills were designed for students to demonstrate that they have mastery in reading, writing and math at levels that prepare them for college and career. Mastery can be demonstrated through a variety of assessment tools. The Essential Skills were not designed to be associated with any one course, rather they represent the accumulative progress throughout an academic career.

While the Essential Skills requirements warrant review, as do all aspects of the diploma, they should not be jettisoned at the outset. These requirements, which have been in place for a decade, were established through a long, consultative process by the State Board. They addressed a critical challenge communicated by employers and post-secondary institutions alike that many students did not have the reading, writing and math mastery needed to succeed. It was considered critical for ensuring an equitable education.

I urge you to remove this provision from SB 744 A and include the Essential Skills in the comprehensive diploma review.

Sincerely,

Duncan Wyse
President
Oregon Business Council