

May 25, 2021

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

SB 744 A - Review of Oregon Diploma House Education Committee

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

FACT Oregon is the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, designated Parent Training Information (PTI) Center, serving Oregon families as they navigate Special Education services. Providing peer delivered support, training, and resources, we equip and empower families of youth experiencing disability to have high expectations as they pursue whole, full lives in community.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) establishes in law that the main purpose of special education services is to prepare students experiencing disability *for further learning, future employment, and independence in community*. Special education services are intended to provide students experiencing disability access to general education curriculum alongside non-disabled peers. This includes providing the supplemental supports, modifications, and accommodations necessary to pursue and earn a diploma. We appreciate Senator Dembrow's support in ensuring that **SB 744 A** includes review of all diploma options and that this review includes identification of systemic barriers that impede diploma access. Unaddressed ableism results in segregated classrooms that seldom, if ever, award diplomas. This is unacceptable, and districts should be held responsible to demonstrate that all students have access to what is needed to earn a diploma. With this in mind, we ask that the review consider removing the alternative certificate from the list of diploma options and direct the State Board of Education to define the alternative certificate as an exit document and include when and to whom it would be issued. It should be seldom, and in special circumstances, but we believe it is misused as a catch-all for students with disabilities who need significant support. Our analysis of Oregon's 2020-21 graduation cohort data confirms that 94% of all such alternate certificates were to students with disabilities and 98% were issued to students identified as "combined disadvantaged."

We would like to see the review examine protocol and practice for ensuring families are aware of diploma options and would like to see diploma discussions captured in the IEP.

ODE implementation of the Student Success Act with its embedded equity stance, along with the Office of Enhancing Student Opportunities three-fold goal to focus its efforts on Inclusion, Equity, and Results, give me hope that we will do what is necessary to ensure that all students have access to a diploma.

Thank you for your consideration,
Roberta Dunn, FACT Oregon