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On Behalf Of: myself  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB1521

I have spent 8 years on the Portland School Board and followed that board by attending meetings and doing various other research since 1974. I also taught for 43 years.

I have also followed the Newberg situation which I am sure has been a major impetus on this bill.

The part of the bill which protects a superintendent from being pressured to break the law is very well done and a necessary improvement on what is presently the case.

However, the part of the bill which necessitates one full year for a firing without cause is ridiculous. Maybe a week would be appropriate. I participated in the most famous firing of a superintendent in Oregon history in the early 1980's when as a board member I voted to fire Superintendent Robert Blanchard, at the time the longest active superintendent in a big city in the United States. It was necessary and needed to be done quickly in order to create more equal opportunities for Black children in Portland. If we would have had to wait a year then it would have been a year of unwieldy chaos with thousands of Black children waiting for more equal opportunities. This type of limitation on school boards would open the door for not only chaos but would also limit democracy at the local level.

Another idea that seems to be making its rounds of the legislature is the idea of training school board members. This is only a decent idea if it clearly spells out what the training should be. Fine to train board members on educational law, on the roles of various state agencies such as ODE and child services, on Oregon's educational history, and on various educational terminology and the role education plays in state and federal government. It is definitely not O.K. to educate school board members on their role as a board member and doubly not O.K. to include the OSBA in any part of the training. The reason for this is that for many, many years they have been spewing the idea that a school board member has two functions: 1) to write policy, and 2) to hire and supervise the superintendent. This is just balderdash. Oregon law says that school board members (having 4 votes) may do what they would "within" the law and their own policies. End of story. That is the role of a school board member and they are in no way limited outside of those restrictions. Yet, the OSBA continues to teach school board members their narrow view. In fact, it is so bad, that at one point they were telling school board members they shouldn't visit schools in their district. Crazy.