



From the desk of Senator Sara Gelsler Blouin

*Sara A. Gelsler Blouin*

The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is a group of more than 40 organizations and individuals across Oregon that come together to advocate for the services to further the values outlined in ORS

427.007: to support people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) to exercise self-determination, living and working in the most integrated community settings, and providing services for families to raise their children at home. Our members represent advocacy groups (including self-advocacy organizations), family peer supports, DD residential providers, DD supported employment providers and Support Services Brokerages.

We believe that all Oregon students have a right to a full day of public education in their neighborhood schools. SB 819 will provide a clear legal framework that will require ODE to eliminate the frequent use and long-term shortened school days of students with disabilities in an accountable way. In doing so, it will spare hundreds of Oregon children from an experience that robs them of the basic right to receive a full day of effective education at the public school where they live. It will change lives.

Oregon school districts will be clearly and accountably prohibited from reducing the school days of children because of behavioral issues without written and revocable parental agreement. This will end any confusion about what constitutes a unilateral and unlawful district imposition of SSDs. As a result, it will also end all too common situations in which a parent agrees to what they believe will be a short period of a reduced school day that turns into months or years during which the child is prevented from accessing education for more than a few hours a day.

The revocation of parent consent will trigger a speedy and time-limited return to the full day of school. This is their right. This will end another common scenario in which parents are repeatedly advised not “make a fuss” because a longer school day is just around the corner as soon their children attain a level of performance measured against criteria that act to prolong exclusion from school.

In what we expect will become rare situations in which SSDs might continue for substantial periods of time despite parental objections, SB 819 will require a significant measure of compensatory education to redress the harm associated with lost time in school. We believe that SB 819 will prompt ODE to adopt a new and necessary understanding of its role as the agency that is entrusted to oversee a comprehensive educational system that ensures that every Oregon child with a disability receives FAPE in the least restrictive environment without discrimination based on disability. This bill will help ensure that all children regardless of disability have access to public education.

Students with disabilities should have a right to a full day of education. We understand that there is a workforce shortage, but this workforce shortage cannot be placed on the backs of families and students. We respectfully ask that you **pass SB 819** and allow students to have access to the education that they legally have a right to.



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