



Oregon School Employees Association

www.osea.org

State Office: 4735 Liberty Road S, Salem, OR 97302-5036

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June 5, 2023

Joint Sub-Committee on Education
Senator Lew Frederick, Co-Chair
Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair

Re: Testimony in Opposition to the Dash 7 Amendments to HB 3198

Co-Chairs Fredrick and McLain and Members of the Joint Sub-Committee on Education:

On behalf of the over 23,000 members of OSEA in all corners of our great state, in nearly all levels of Oregon public education, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, education service districts, special districts like parks and rec, and community colleges, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Governor Kotek's Early Childhood Literacy Initiative but we are opposed to the Dash 7 amendments to HB 3198.

We agree with Governor Kotek's support for the strategic need to address early childhood learning that emphasizes literacy. Investing in early childhood literacy is the gift that keeps giving throughout our lives. Organizationally, OSEA will be fully engaged in the development of this policy, and we can facilitate our Head Start members' expertise as many have been shaping kids' first educational experiences for decades. OSEA supports fully leveraging existing public and private programs by increasing culturally specific literacy skills. We are hopeful that these programs will provide a meaningful investment in Oregon's families' futures.

Classified employees represent the most diverse component in the professional public education workforce, representing racial, cultural, language, age and geographic diversity. We more closely reflect the students that we support and we appreciate the clear legislative provisions that expressly support this. Our early childhood learning members currently provide daily support for children as they build life and literacy skills. Most of Oregon's Head Start programs are private entities, but there are some early learning programs that are public. Regardless of public or private facilities, our members are available to kids and families every day to make a difference for our tiny neighbors.

We cannot support the funding source identified in the Dash 7 amendments, which identify the Student Investment Account (SIA) from the Student Success Act (SSA). We believe that SIA funds identified are legislatively directed to K-12, not early childhood education. While the initiative is important and well-conceived, OSEA cannot support taking funds away from K-12. We are hopeful that general funds may be identified for appropriation, to keep our public schools and ESDs funded.





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We want to call to attention the importance of recruitment, retention and support for early childhood employees as this particular sector of Oregon's education workforce has a very high rate of turnover. While investments in curriculum are key, it is critically important to invest in family wage jobs to ensure higher retention and recruitment. It is invaluable when an educator supports multiple siblings over the years in a program. When classified employees can earn a living wage, we can support generations. This ability to lift up members in the same household or neighborhood, also lifts up communities.

The policy in HB 3198 prioritizes the importance of early childhood literacy and its lasting lifetime effects for all Oregon's students by increasing early literacy in prekindergarten students. Now, we are asking for the funding stream in the Dash 7 amendments to reflect that the early childhood literacy is in addition to, not instead of, K-12 continuing service level funding. With this funding stream change, we are setting all of Oregon's students up for success.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

Sincerely,

Susan Allen, OSEA Government Relations Specialist

