

Submitter: Dawn Watson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB2753

Chair Neron and House Education Committee Members:

Thank you so much for serving on the Education Committee, This is such important work for our State, especially in these current times.

My name is Dawn Watson. I serve as a board of director on the Phoenix-Talent School board, I'm the regional OSBA representative for Southern Oregon, and on the OSBA rural schools committee. However, these are my own personal opinions, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of my district, other board members I serve with, or the various committees and boards I'm serving on. I'm writing to you today in opposition to HB2753. I do agree with the intent of this bill, to diversify boards, however I'm not sure that would be the actual outcome.

The costs to districts especially smaller ones to cover a stipend would be incredibly challenging. Several districts in our region struggle to send their board members to trainings and learning opportunities, especially since those are often held over 150 miles away and require overnight stays. Many districts of a smaller size will have to choose between trainings and stipends. With the current budget forecast they might not even be able to choose and would have to use all money towards programs and staff for their district. Urban schools are closer to these training and have bigger budgets and might not have to make these difficult budgeting choices. Therefore, this will further divide the inequities that already exist between urban and rural school districts in Oregon.

I fear that the stipend and reimbursement will bring people to the position of school board directors for additional income, and not necessarily for what is best for the children and community in our district. If this bill happens to move forward, I strongly suggest the ability for boards to put parameters around the stipend and reimbursement. These parameters could include percentage of attendance required for regularly scheduled board meetings, and a cap per out of state travel reimbursements.

Some school boards are currently thinking outside the box to support diversity on their boards, such as offering chrome books, Wi-Fi hotspots, ability to attend meetings via the internet to their board of directors. If this bill moves forward, I suggest that there is language that allows a board to be creative in how they support diversity to their directors. Each district is unique and flexibility to provide diversity to their board of directors is necessary.

I hope that you vote no on this bill. However, if moves forward. please consider my suggestions on additional language and district flexibility.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Dawn Watson
School Board Director