



February 8, 2023

To: House Committee on Education
From: Oregon Education Association
Re: Support for HB 2656

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Wright and Hudson, members of the House Committee on Education,

The Oregon Education Association represents over 41,000 educators and education service professionals across the state, from pre-k to community colleges. Our members are teachers, bus drivers, custodians, teacher assistants, nutrition specialists, community college professionals and more.

I'm here to express our support for HB 2656, also known as the Elevate Student Voice Act.

HB 2656 does two very important, key things:

- Requires each school district to participate in the Student Educational Equity Development survey and the Student Health Survey starting in the 2024-25 school year.
- Creates an advisory committee under the superintendent to review and make recommendations for revisions to the education accountability framework in the state.

The -2 amendment to the bill clarifies a few things regarding implementation and timeline:

- The state board of education will adopt rules related to increased student participation rates in these qualified surveys under the bills definition.
- Directs the department of Education to adopt rules by the beginning of the 2024-25 school year.
- Ensures that the advisory committee which is reviewing the state's accountability framework take the data from and purpose of these surveys into account.

We have some testimony you will hear today from families, educators, students and coalition partners, but before we get to those, I want to give the committee some context on where this comes from.

Oregon has a federal school accountability system to meet the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Through this system, schools are identified as one of the following: Comprehensive School Improvement, Targeted School Improvement (CSI/TSI) or not designated. This is similar to the former Priority/Focus school framework that was in place in Oregon during the No Child Left Behind years. Districts with schools designated as CSI or TSI receive additional support and resources. Additionally, Oregon has an accountability framework for the Student Investment Account. The indicators are similar to the ESSA accountability framework with a few differences. One key difference: Districts struggling to reach the longitudinal goals of the SIA also can receive additional support and resources.

Oregon's current system is based significantly on measuring outputs – summative academic outcomes or test scores, graduation rates, attendance – and less on the inputs that support those final outcomes. And just as we think about the importance of a balanced assessment system that pulls from benchmark



assessments, annual tests, and ongoing classroom assessment, we have to remember that these are, at best, incomplete when we seek the answers to our questions about what is working well in schools and what and where needs better resourcing and more support.

You might be asking yourself why these specific surveys and why now?

The current landscape and picture of how we measure school quality and student success are missing key elements. School quality and student success is measured and reported to the community through indicators that help us understand if students feel safe, healthy, and happy, the essential building blocks for all humans to then learn. Some of which are things like school climate/ safety, school culture, sense of belonging, mental and behavioral health, and self-efficacy.

If we value what students are experiencing in schools just as we place a value on outputs like graduation rates or test scores, we must ensure that across all corners of the state, we are utilizing the tools at hand, like the Student Educational Equity Survey (developed by ODE in 2020) and the Student Health Survey (developed by OHA in 2010), to better understand how students are doing in schools.

After more than 20 years of prioritizing summative assessments, we know that academic achievement gaps exist between student groups, particularly students of color and students with disabilities. These two surveys taken together can help us better identify *why* those gaps persist including factors outside of schools and help us as a state better target resources to every student in Oregon finds success.

These surveys ask critical questions that help the state to better target resources and support where it's needed most, especially to support student mental and behavioral health, a key challenge in a post-pandemic world. But as we know, all districts aren't the same and don't all use these tools available to them.

The last time we as a state did a deeper dive in to our accountability framework and these indicators, it was 2016/2017--- over 6 years ago--- well before the pandemic exacerbated our workforce issues, forever changed classroom learning environments and students' socio-emotional development.

These surveys help us see with an insightful eye into things like student mental health and conditions for learning. They ask about whether students have access to tools that help connect us with our teachers; whether we have access to a full-rounded education, such as play, art or music; and they ask about whether students have a trusted adult either in or outside of school. As we continue to grapple with the post-covid hybrid learning environments and the student mental health crisis across in our state, it is incumbent upon us to elevate every student voice that we possibly can for the fullest picture for what we have and what we most need. There is no better time to do this.

This is an important part of our state assessment systems and a free and accessible public education that serves all students.

Thank you for your time today and I encourage the committee to pass HB 2656.

Michele Ruffin

Government Relations Consultant

Oregon Education Association