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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure: SB292

SB 292 and its -1 amendment is a step backward for Oregon. School board members want an exception that allows them to hide the names of their businesses and sources of income from the public. Rather than promoting transparency, school board members want to keep their information hidden, so that the public will not know when they are acting in their own interests rather than in the school district's interest. Such an exception is not only contrary to Oregon's standards for public transparency, but it creates a double standard. Board members in some districts will file statements of economic interest while board members in neighboring districts won't. Residents in Portland and larger communities will be able to look up this information on their school board members, but those in the rest of Oregon won't have that same opportunity. Also, the exception for districts with less than 1650 students is arbitrary. Superintendents and business managers in EVERY school district file statements of economic interest -- why shouldn't the school board members in every district also be required to file?

We are told this exception is needed because school districts won't be able to find anyone willing to serve on the school board. We have heard these sort of "sky is falling" arguments before and they fall short. Despite being required to file a statement of economic interest, people still serve on city councils in the very same cities where these school districts are located. They also serve on planning commissions, county commissions, port commissions, not to mention all the State positions that are required to file statements of economic interest. Oregon has had these financial reporting requirements on the books for almost 50 years. It is about time that we hold school board members to the same standards.

All of you on this Committee file statements of economic interest. You know that they are not invasive. You also know that they serve an important purpose. Senators, I urge you to vote NO on this amendment. Do not create an unnecessary exception for school board members. Do not move Oregon backwards when it comes to public transparency.