

May 8, 2023

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Oregon State Capitol

Salem OR 97301

RE: SB 819 – Testimony in Support

Chair Neron and Members of the House Committee on Education

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on SB 819. For the past 10 years, Disability Rights Oregon (of which I was Legal Director for half of those years) has worked to get Oregon School Districts follow the law, and provide full days for all students, including those with disabilities, some of whom have behavioral issues. Instead, students with disabilities continue to be short changed, given fewer hours resulting in less education and major deficiencies in school achievement.

The goal of free and equal participation in education will finally become a reality if this bill is passed. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] ensures that students with disabilities have available a Free Appropriate Public Education [FAPE] that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet the student's unique need and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. It makes clear that parents as members of the IEP team are entitled to participate in the process. Yet, despite this, students with disabilities are more likely to have school days cut short than their nondisabled peers. I support this bill as a protective measure to ensure that families can meaningfully participate in educational decisions afforded to them by IDEA. We need to shift the focus of shortened day away from children with disabilities onto districts to ensure that staff are provided adequate training and information to support students, and to manage limited resources to ensure that the most vulnerable students receive an equitable education.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

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