

Submitter: M L
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: SB819

Hello. I am writing in opposition of SB 819. As a public educator, I am concerned that this bill has had little to no input from professional educators, counselors, support staff and administrators. We are in an educational crisis, experiencing the highest levels of student violence and mental health crisis we have seen in decades. While it is not a perfect system, the use of abbreviated school days allows teams -- parents, educators, licensed professionals, administrators, and community support networks -- to provide the highest quality education while also maintaining safety for all. The process of an abbreviated day is already rigorous, includes participation from families, and requires teams to stay in communication every 6 weeks to track behavioral progress of students; it is research-based and thorough; it is monitored closely by school administration; it is proven to be an effective tool in supporting students with the highest level of needs. Across my 10 years as a licensed specialist, I have never made this decision unilaterally; it has always been with the support of families and caregivers. It is HIGHLY CONCERNING that families would be able to make decisions unilaterally, without the input of experts, school staff, or licensed specialists. While an abbreviated day program is a difficult decision to make, it is one made with caution and care. Parents have a wealth of procedural safeguards and recourse already available to them; SB 819 does nothing more than take away the ability to make reasonable decisions about student and staff safety.

I am concerned with the additional changes that SB 819 may make to the special education process. Federal law has already outlined the procedures and protocols necessary to find students eligible for services, make changes to plans, and implement IEP services. It is a process that has worked, successfully, for decades, and changes will cause more harm than good. The precedent set by IDEA are paramount to protecting during these trying times in education. Changes to these protocols will not amount to more protection for families and students; instead, they will cause greater harm to classrooms, schools, and school districts; they will throw us into an even deeper crisis; they will harm students and families.

Again, I implore you to oppose SB 819. It is not vetted by educators and educational professionals. It is not created based off of evidence-based research or best practices. It does not protect students and families. I can guarantee that the passage of SB 819 will only put Oregon schools further into crisis; educators will leave the profession; and our most vulnerable students will be left without access to the programming and supports that are best for them.