



Testimony submitted to the House Education Committee, May 10, 2023
Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted (OATAG)

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

I am very happy to have this opportunity to speak to you today about Senate Bill 736.

OATAG believes that all students should have access to instruction that will enable them to reach their potential.

We are concerned that Oregon is leaving too many of its advanced students behind. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, fewer Oregon students than average are at the “advanced” level in both math and reading, in both fourth and eighth grade. The number of students identified for Talented and Gifted services has also fallen dramatically.

According to the most recent data compiled by the Federal Office of Civil rights in 2017-18, fewer Oregon high schools offered advanced mathematics and calculus courses or a full range of science courses than those elsewhere in the country.

We also experience large disparities in access to advanced classes based on geography, income, and ethnicity. We have disparities in access both from district to district and also from school to school within our larger districts. The grants created by House Bill 2263 in 2019 to address this problem were never funded or implemented.

According to research, the problem begins in middle school, where a lack of access to accelerated learning affects student achievement, attendance, discipline, and engagement. We also need better ways to improve articulation and transitions from elementary and middle school to high school.

The problem extends beyond high school to higher education because students who lack access to accelerated learning opportunities in high school are less likely to attend and complete college and are more likely to be assigned to “developmental” courses in community colleges. More Oregon students leave college without graduating than in any other state except Alaska.

We already have some data on the extent to which high school students have participated in accelerated courses, but those reports do not extend below high school. Moreover, the reports just show the current situation; they do not recommend ways to improve it in our k-12 system.

As Oregon rolls out a new mathematics framework for grades k-14, and our higher education community is working to make course credits more transparent and transferable, it is important to take an overall look at how we can do better for these students and leverage our existing resources more efficiently.

To address the problem, OATAG is asking you to join us in supporting SB 736 and then to make a commitment to fund the accelerated services our students need. We need your help to ensure that our education services are more equitable and effective.

Increasing access to advanced instruction will support our economic development and begin to reverse decades of neglect for our hard-working, ambitious, and capable children.

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