



To: Senate Education & Workforce Development Committee

From: Sena Norton
6th Grade Teacher at Boring Middle School and OEA Regional Vice President

Date: Wednesday, February 8, 2012

Re: SB 1581 with Amendments

Chair Hass and Members of the Committee, my name is Sena Norton and I am a sixth grade teacher at Boring Middle School. I am also a regional vice president for the Oregon Education Association, and I am here today to speak on behalf of the OEA.

Oregon educators have long been at the forefront in demanding transformation of our public schools to ensure that all students have an opportunity to succeed in every Oregon community. Toward that end, OEA embraces the goal of creating a seamless, unified system from early childhood through post secondary to make certain that every student has access to a quality public school. Oregon educators also strongly believe in providing the necessary investment in our schools and students in order to improve the future for all Oregonians.

The work of the OEIB will continue well beyond the 2012 February session. As a result of SB 1581, it will soon hire the first Chief Education Officer. OEA believes that the new Chief Education Officer must have strong experience in public education, be a real collaborator, who can bring Oregonians together, and comes with a thoughtful vision on how make Oregon's public education system a success for all of Oregonians.

Another central component of Governor Kitzhaber's effort through the Oregon Education Investment Board is the creation of Achievement Compacts. The compacts seek to 'organize a system of accountability and support to ensure student success from pre-K to college and career readiness.' Oregon educators welcome accountability and fully embrace setting goals and identifying the resources needed to reach those goals. The Oregon Education Association has been working closely with the Governor's office and other education stakeholders on amendments to SB 1581 that will support this work so that Achievement Compacts stay focused on making a difference for all students.

- **Achievement Compacts must be developed collaboratively between local school leaders and educators.** It's critical that any achievement compact require collaboration between the district and the educators charged with delivering on it to

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help all students in public schools succeed. It is essential that the compacts provide a meaningful opportunity for professional educators to be directly involved in developing, evaluating, setting and meeting the districts' goals for student success.

- **Ensure that every district has access to a statewide data and technology infrastructure to share best practices and information.** In order to achieve the goals put forth in the compacts, schools need the ability to collaborate with, and share information and best practices with other local schools; districts need to share among districts; and the Oregon public needs to know how this new direction is leading to increased student achievement and success.
- **Move away from an overemphasis on harmful standardized testing.** Research has long proven that standardized test scores are not the best measure of a student's success in school and also an incomplete measure of student growth. The achievement compacts should measure the things that really matter in terms of student achievement such as learning conditions, class size, individual student growth, and teacher quality through formative evaluation processes and 100% licensure standards. The OEIB should focus on the significant barriers to learning that impact student achievement like economic conditions, disability, language and lack of parental involvement, all which play a large part in determining the level of success of all Oregon's students. I know these factors well, as a current classroom teacher of 37 individuals, each bringing with them 37 different learning challenges and 37 different possibilities of greatness.
- **Align our investment in our schools with the outcome we expect.** There is no additional funding that will come with these compacts. It's important to recognize that school districts are still dealing with "crisis" level budgets. We cannot expect our schools to continue to do more with less. Oregon cannot expect 100% results with a 65% investment. We must address the disinvestment in public education so that every student has the opportunity to succeed.
- **Protect local control and avoid one-size-fits-all mandates.** Every community in Oregon has its own unique set of conditions under which students best learn. Student and family demographics, socio-economic status, geography, and the level of community support are just a few factors that significantly impact teaching and learning. It is parents, teachers, school and community leaders who know what is best for their neighborhood schools. The achievement compacts should reflect what the local community wants and needs for their students and their schools.
- **Address the needs of the whole child/family.** The leading predictor of student success is family income. Poverty directly impacts a student's ability to learn. The compacts must recognize the level to which students are experiencing food and housing insecurity, lack of access to health care and other conditions of poverty that impact learning. Oregon's public schools need to support opportunities for ALL students to achieve.
- **Share accountability.** We are all in this together --- students, parents, teachers, administrators and public officials. Educators believe in accountability and are not afraid of high standards. As we expect our schools to perform to certain standards,

it just makes sense that the compacts would include reciprocal standards for elected officials who are responsible for providing the investment necessary for every student in a public school to succeed.

While the legislation includes an extremely aggressive timeline for implementation, OEA believes that there is still much work to be done before we can be assured that these compacts will function in the best interest of all students in every district across the state. OEA is appreciative that the Governor is offering amendments that take a step forward on addressing several areas of our concerns.

OEA is supporting SB 1581 with the amendments that were described in the last hearing, and we will continue to work with legislators, the Oregon Education Investment Board and the Governor to ensure that the Achievement Compacts contribute to increasing student achievement and provide access to a well-rounded educational experience for all students.

In closing I wish to share a reminder, that public education is distinctly different from a business-- Public education serves all students and their families. I stand with my 37 students each and every day as a professional public school educator and carry on with a journey towards excellence be that academic or personal. We work hard to support student achievement regardless of socio-economic conditions, learning disability or other special education need, language, parental involvement – or for that matter public investment.