

OSBA Legislative Highlights



March 13, 2015

State School Fund hearings held

The Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education held public hearings this week on the budget bill (**House Bill 5017**) to fund the State School Fund (SSF) for the 2015-17 biennium. Prior to the public hearing, the subcommittee had heard testimony from the Oregon Department of Education on its operational budget, as well as general information on the SSF from the department. However, this was the time for the public and school districts to testify before the subcommittee and tell how the proposed SSF budget of \$7.235 billion will impact their school districts.

OSBA worked with several of our education partners to bring together school districts from across the state to tell their stories. Leading off on behalf of OSBA was **Sam Lee**, a member of the Winston-Dillard School Board and OSBA's secretary-treasurer. Lee laid out for the subcommittee the various scenarios for his district at certain funding levels. "At \$7.85 billion we are basically keeping our heads above water. At \$7.5 billion we start cutting services. Class sizes will increase, salaries will need to be rolled back for our employees and we will not be able to do the basic necessary capital projects at this level. At \$7.25 billion we will need to let some water out of the pool because we will be drowning. We will either need to cut six school days, cut instructional assistants across our schools or cut teachers – that's where we are and it will definitely impact our kids in a negative way," Lee said.



PPS Supt. Carole Smith; Gwen Sullivan, Portland Assn. of Teachers president; and Bobbie Regan, PPS board member and OSBA president-elect, testify before the subcommittee about how the proposed SSF budget will impact Portland schools.

Following Lee was a panel from Portland Public Schools (PPS) that included Superintendent Carole Smith; Gwen Sullivan, president of the Portland Association of Teachers; and school board member **Bobbie Regan**, who is also OSBA president-elect. Regan told the subcommittee that through the investment the Legislature made last biennium, PPS was able to add instructional days and add back teachers. She urged the subcommittee to continue investment this biennium: "Be visionary and work towards an investment budget, not a cuts budget. When targeted investments occur, magic can happen for our children across Oregon," Regan said.

Some of the hearing's most moving testimony came from a fifth-grade student from the Umatilla School District, Alfonso Bernal. Bernal compared his school experience to that of his older sisters, and told legislators he needs "more help, more teachers and more activities" to achieve his dream of becoming an engineer. He said, "I only get one chance at my education, one chance to be a kid, one chance to be a student. This is my chance. I want to make this world a better place.... Can you please help me become who I want to be tomorrow?" His testimony was followed with applause from the audience and members of the subcommittee. View Alfonso Bernal's testimony at: http://youtu.be/ANJvThar_6w

Several other panels testified about what cuts would need to be made in their districts at a \$7.235 billion SSF budget. In nearly every case, it was a choice between cutting school days, cutting programs, cutting staff or increasing class sizes. Superintendent Colt Gill of the Bethel School District told the subcommittee, "We need \$7.5 billion just to maintain this broken system that we're in right now, and we need to get to \$7.875 billion to head



Supt. Heidi Sipe and student Alfonso Bernal from the Umatilla School District, and Sam Lee, Winston-Dillard School Board member and OSBA secretary-treasurer, tell their stories to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education.

down the path to reach average. We owe our kids more, and we owe the future of our state more,” he said.

The subcommittee was overwhelmed by the number of people signed up to testify; not everyone was heard. According to subcommittee staff, additional public testimony will be taken on March 17 beginning at 8:30 a.m.; other dates may be added. Watch the OSBA hearing schedule for hearing times and locations:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/HearingsSchedule.aspx

OSBA and its coalition partners are pushing the Legislature to increase the allocation to the SSF to a minimum of \$7.5 billion for the 2015-17 biennium. **Please reach out to your legislators and ask that they support**



Show your support for fully funding Oregon's public schools - Sign the petition!

the increased appropriation to the SSF. Tell them your local story of what cuts in your district will look like at the \$7.235 billion level of funding. Also, be sure to sign the Promise of Oregon full funding petition at: www.PromiseOregon.org.

View House Bill 5017:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx?s=15&t=&r=&q=hb 5017&c=50&key=HB 50170&ptadd=: HB 5017 Details

Education Roundup: Student discipline discussion dominates Senate Education Committee

On March 10, the Senate Education Committee held public hearings on four bills related to student discipline. This issue has garnered significant discussion recently, particularly around state data that show students of color and students of poverty have higher rates of suspension and expulsion than their peers.

Senate Bill 553 would impose limits on the use of out-of-school suspension and expulsion for students under the age of 12, except in extreme circumstances. Proponents of the change, including the child advocacy organization Youth Rights and Justice, argue that suspending a young child for being insubordinate to school staff, for example, is not conducive to addressing inappropriate behavior. The bill currently allows schools to continue to use “in-school” suspensions. OSBA is generally supportive of limiting the use of out-of-school suspension and expulsion for young students who do not pose a harm to themselves or others; we will be working with proponents of the bill to find a policy that is agreeable to both sides.

Senate Bill 554 provides funds to the Department of Education to accomplish the following goals in partnership with local school districts:

- Implementing discipline strategies designed to increase the academic achievement of students and to decrease the amount of time students are removed or excluded from the classroom setting due to disciplinary sanctions;

- Decreasing overall rates of suspension and expulsion and the number of days that students are removed from the classroom setting due to suspension or expulsion; and
- Reducing disparities in rates of discipline among students of different racial and ethnic groups, among students from different family income levels, between students with disabilities and students without disabilities, and between male and female students.

The bill would provide funds for professional development and programmatic changes at school districts; as of this writing, the appropriation amount has not been determined.

Senate Bill 556 is simple and straightforward: it would prohibit school districts from expelling students for being truant. All present at the hearing agreed this was counterproductive and a poor tool for addressing the root cause of a student's poor attendance.

Senate Bill 758 establishes the Task Force on Students with Intensive Behavioral Needs. The task force is charged with:

- Evaluating methods for assisting educators, school districts and education service districts in addressing the issues associated with students who have intensive behavioral needs; and
- Identifying guidelines for educators, school districts and education service districts that must emphasize collaborative problem solving.

Members of the Senate Education Committee were very receptive to the proposals and we expect to see votes on the bills in the near future.

Contact Morgan Allen (mallen@osba.org or 800-578-6722) if you have questions on these bills.

View Senate Bill 553:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx?s=15&t=&r=&q=sb 0553&c=50&key=SB 05530&ptadd=: SB 553 Details

View Senate Bill 554:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx?s=15&t=&r=&q=sb 0554&c=50&key=SB 05540&ptadd=: SB 554 Details

View Senate Bill 556:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx?s=15&t=&r=&q=sb 0556&c=50&key=SB 05560&ptadd=: SB 556 Details

View Senate Bill 758:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx?s=15&t=&r=&q=sb 0758&c=50&key=SB 07580&ptadd=: SB 758 Details

Watch the update video here:

http://www.osba.org/News%20Center/Announcements/2015-03-12_Legislative_Update_Video_a.spx

Download the Promise resolution

here: <http://promiseoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Promise-Sample-Resolution-Updated.pdf>

