

OSBA Legislative Highlights



March 20, 2015

State School Fund testimony continues

The Education Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means continued its public hearings this week on the State School Fund (SSF), with testimony from several school districts – including Beaverton, David Douglas and North Clackamas – that the proposed \$7.235 billion budget would create reductions in their schools.

Beaverton School Board Member **Susan Greenburg** told the subcommittee, “Please fund our schools at a level that won’t take us backwards. A \$7.235 billion appropriation will underfund our schools. At this level, Beaverton will lose \$4.1 million.” She then described the impact of such a reduction on Beaverton: “We would eliminate teaching positions, increase class sizes and lose one-half of our counseling staff. We would also eliminate all our after-school and summer programs.”

Don Grotting, superintendent of the David Douglas School District, told the subcommittee some sobering statistics about his school district. “We currently have kindergarten classes with 30 students. Our core secondary level classes have 40 students and our elective classes are over 60 students per class. At \$7.235 billion this does not get better. In order for this to get better we need a State School Fund appropriation of \$7.875 billion. This will improve on education and our economy in Oregon.”

Matt Utterback, North Clackamas School District superintendent, told the committee that a \$7.235 billion State School Fund amount will not improve the situation in his school district. “\$7.235 billion does nothing to restore the 170 teaching positions eliminated during the recession. It means we will have to maintain three furlough days each year for the next two years, again denying our students a full school year for the seventh straight year. Our fourth-grade class sizes will be 36 students and our high school math class sizes will be 38 students. It also does not allow us to purchase new curriculum to align with the Common Core Standards. On average our curriculum is 12 years old.”

Each district that has testified before the subcommittee has told members that a SSF appropriation of \$7.235 billion is a dis-investment budget that does not lower class sizes and does not restore programs or teachers to a level that will lead to increased academic achievement for students. Regardless of the testimony, it still appears that the legislative leadership intends to move

the SSF budget at the \$7.235 billion level in the near future.

It is crucial for school board members and administrators across Oregon to reach out to their legislators and tell them a \$7.235 billion budget is inadequate and that they need to minimally fund schools at a \$7.5 billion level for the 2015-17 biennium. Contact your legislators at 1-800-332-2313 or www.oregonlegislature.gov/FindYourLegislator/leg-districts.html

Be sure to sign the Promise of Oregon full funding petition at: promiseoregon.org/petition/.

For more information, contact Jim Green (jgreen@osba.org).



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

Charter school bills heard in House Education Committee

The House Education Committee heard several charter school bills this week, including **House Bill 3045** and **House Bill 3046**.

HB 3045 would change ORS 338.155, removing the requirement that school districts transfer monies to other school districts for students attending a public charter school in a district in which the students are not residents.

Currently, if a student attends a charter school in a district other than the one in which he/she resides, the receiving district sends a small percentage of monies received for the charter student back to the resident district. This practice has been in place since the charter school law was enacted in 1999. The returned money is to assist with related costs associated with the student. School districts handle the process of returning these monies to resident districts in various ways; some districts do not return any monies because the amount is very small.

Testimony before the committee indicated this process is very cumbersome, requiring school districts to spend staff time and resources on a practice that does not actually result in a significant amount of money being sent back to the student's resident school district. The committee was told that this process actually costs more to implement than it produces. There was no testimony in

opposition to HB 3045 and the bill is not scheduled for further action at this time.

HB 3046 was brought to the committee by Portland Public Schools (PPS). PPS Board Member **Ruth Adkins**, Government Relations Director David Williams and Charter Coordinator Kristen Miles testified, telling the committee that PPS has eleven charter schools and receives several charter intent letters every year. “The bill is intended to promote board goals and align any new charter schools toward the PPS academic priorities,” said Adkins.

Miles described the bill for the committee, saying “the main focus is to allow districts to request a waiver from the State Board of Education (SBE) for the existing application and evaluation process in order to bring greater focus to new charter school applications, providing greater relevance of charter schools to the district’s main educational goals.”

The waiver would require a school district to submit a proposal to SBE for the “alternate application process,” along with a set of evaluation criteria.

The waiver request to the SBE must include:

- The alternative application process proposed by the district;
- How the process aligns with the district’s goals for increasing student achievement and outlines the accountability framework; and
- How the process would increase equitable access to underserved families.

The SBE would evaluate the proposal based on these components and either approve or deny the request for waiver submitted by the school district.

The committee had several questions for the PPS panel. The questions primarily focused on the intent of the bill, and included several inquiries about how and why this new process is needed and if the real intent of the bill is to reduce the charter options available to parents for their students.

Miles responded to the committee saying, “This waiver process is not mandatory; school districts can continue as they currently handle charter school proposals and applications. It is not intended to deter charter school applications, but to ensure they are aligned with district academic goals designed to better meet the needs of the district and the students.”

No further action is currently scheduled on HB 3046.

Contact Lori Sattenspiel (lsattenspiel@osba.org) for more information.

View HB 3045:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx?s=15&t=&r=&q=hb_3045&c=50&key=HB30450&ptadd=:HB_3045_Details

View HB 3046:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx?s=15&t=&r=&q=hb_3046&c=50&key=HB30460&ptadd=:HB_3046_Details

Education Roundup: Construction excise taxes and dyslexia training

On March 17, the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee held a public hearing on a bill that would repeal the sunset on the law authorizing only school districts to impose construction excise taxes. **Senate Bill 903** would extend the law, originally passed in 2007, that allows school districts to impose a tax on new construction measured by the square footage of improvement. Without passage of this bill, the prohibition on other local governments from imposing these types of taxes “sunsets” in 2018.

The taxing authority was the result of a compromise between K-12 advocates and the Oregon Home Builders Association. Representatives of the Oregon Education Association (OEA), Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) and the Oregon Home Builders Association testified in favor of the legislation. OSBA Legislative Specialist Morgan Allen told the committee that construction excise taxes were authorized by more than 50 districts in 2012-13 (the last year complete data is available) and raised more than \$15 million dollars for those districts to put toward their facility needs.

The committee is expected to take a vote to send the bill to the Senate floor shortly.

Also on March 17, the Senate Education Committee heard from supporters of **Senate Bill 612**. As drafted, the bill requires school districts to do the following:

- Ensure every student who is first enrolled at a school or a public charter school in the school district for kindergarten or first grade receives a screening of risk factors for dyslexia;
- Ensure every licensed or registered teacher of kindergarten through grade three, special education teacher and reading specialist receives annual training on early identification of students with dyslexia, early intervention for students with dyslexia and evidence-based instructional practices for students with dyslexia; and
- Ensure every licensed or registered teacher of grades 4 through 12 receives annual training on how best to support and offer accommodations to students with dyslexia.

OSBA is supportive of the idea of better training and screening for students with dyslexia, but will be asking for amendments to reduce the scope and cost of the bill.

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

View SB 903:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx?s=15&t=&r=&q=sb_0903&c=50&key=SB09030&ptadd=:SB_903_Details

View SB 612:

www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx?s=15&t=&r=&q=sb_0612&c=50&key=SB06120&ptadd=:SB_612_Details