STAND
for children

Dear Governor Kitzhaber and members of the Oregon Education Investment Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Dana Hepper, and I'm the Advocacy Director with Stand for Children.

For one year now, Stand for Children has been a member of a growing coalition of organizations working to improve access and response to data about school discipline. The coalition includes ACLU of Oregon; Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and Siletz Indians; NAACP; Amigos MSC; Linn-Benton Hispanic Advisory Committee; the Oregon Commissions for Women, Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, Black Affairs, and Hispanic Affairs; Portland Parent Union; Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality; Stand for Children; Una Voz; Urban League of Portland; and Youth, Rights, and Justice Attorneys at Law. It's as a member of this coalition that I'm here before you today.

The coalition was galvanized around a report by the ACLU of Oregon[1] about the disparate impact of school discipline on African-American, Latino, and Native American youth. In Oregon, African-American students are twice as likely as white students to face an out-of-school suspension; Native American students are one and one-half times as likely to face suspension. African-American, Latino, and Native American students are disproportionately impacted by both in-and-out of school suspensions and expulsions. National data tells us that African-American students are more likely to be suspended than their white peers for the same conduct at school.[2]

We want the Oregon Education Investment Board to be knowledgeable about this report and the data in it because addressing school discipline is one essential step to reaching our 40-40-20 goal. A Washington Post report last month sums up the connection between school discipline and educational outcomes:

"Out-of-school suspensions mean lost classroom time and, for some, disconnection from school. A recent landmark study of nearly a million Texas children showed that suspension increased the likelihood of repeating a grade that year and landing in the juvenile-justice system the next year. It also was linked to dropping out."[3]

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[1] The report is available on the ACLU's website: http://aclu-or.org/content/aclu-report-oregon%E2%80%99s-school-prison-pipeline-0.

[2] ACLU report citing: Russell J. Skiba, *Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence* (2000), pp. 11-12; The Advancement Project & The Civil Rights Project, *Opportunities Suspended: The Devastating Consequences of Zero Tolerance and School Discipline Policies* (June 2000), pp. 7-9; Russell J. Skiba, et al., *The Color of Discipline: Sources of Racial and Gender Disproportionality in School Punishment* (2000)

[3] The complete story is available on the Washington Post website: http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/in-washington-area-african-american-students-suspended-and-expelled-two-to-five-times-as-often-as-whites/2011/12/23/gIQA8WNQNP_story.html?hpid=z1.

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School districts can keep kids in school and often in the classroom, so they can keep learning, by implementing alternatives to suspension and expulsion. One example of this is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which is proven to reduce referrals, suspensions, and expulsions.[4] Fortunately, University of Oregon is a leading researcher on this approach.

We know you are guiding the creation of a statewide education database. We want you to know that data on school disciplinary actions are already reported by school districts and compiled by the Oregon Department of Education. Historically, nothing was done with this data. However, the Department agreed this year to begin to publish the data annually in an easily digestible public database. They're kicking off this important work in a meeting later this week.

This data could be incredibly useful in reaching the 40-40-20 goal. We see at least three ways you could utilize this important and available data:

(1) Ensure the statewide database you are guiding includes school discipline data;
(2) Include school discipline as one component of the diagnostic struggling districts and schools complete when they prepare to implement improvement plans; and
(3) Include school discipline data as a mandatory or optional element of the achievement compacts.

Thank you again for your time and commitment to Oregon's public schools.

Sincerely,

Dana Hepper

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[4] Russell J. Skiba & M. Karega Rausch, *Zero Tolerance, Suspension, and Expulsion: Questions of Equity & Effectiveness* (2005), p. 1081.