Oregon Education Investment Board

Public Testimony of Dr. Rex Hagans on SB 1581 regarding constructing more meaningful Achievement Compacts

February 8, 2012

Governor Kitzhauber, Members of the Board

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my ideas on this important legislation.

My name is Rex Hagans. I live in the Canby School District.

I am retired from a 42-year career in education. I have been a teacher, counselor, principal and associate superintendent in local schools, and spent the last 30 years as educational researcher specifically working on change and innovation in our public k-12 school system. I am the Chair of the Canby Education Foundation and have served three terms as the Chair of the district budget committee.

But I am speaking today primarily as the grandfather and great-grand father of 6 children who are currently in or about to enter the Oregon public schools, and in behalf of all those children who are their classmates.

My message is a simple one. The actions taken as SB 1581 is implemented will greatly affect the lives of these children - now. They cannot wait for improvements which are as much as 10 years in the future and should not be exposed to disruptive actions which have high risk of failure in the hope of a better system at some distant future date. While I

applaud the truly impressive efforts of the Governor to improve our educational system, I regard many of current specifics of those efforts with some skepticism. Changes and improvements must be made, beginning with the Achievement Compacts proposed in SB 1581.

The Achievement Compacts effectively change the most basic relationship between the State and our local school districts. Stating that the State will be "tight" on the outcomes and "loose" on how they are to be achieved says to me that local community will have effectively no voice in determining what the truly important outcomes actually are. This is an astounding and disturbing reversal of our long-standing tradition of local control. That concern was soundly echoed by many voices in the recent hearings around the state.

To his credit, the Governor has responded to those concerns by proposing specific amendments to Section 14(5) of SB 1581. These are a significant step in the right direction, but they do not yet go far enough in assuring that the local community does not lose control of its own schools.

Therefore I would like to ask this committee to request that attention be directed to the following in the rule making process that will follow if SB 1581 becomes law:

- <u>Increasing two-way accountability</u>

The current amendments speak only of the processes the local district must follow in preparing a local compact, and the kinds of things that are to be addressed. What happens if a local district proposes to measure success in some unique way? Will the state refuse to accept that?

- A much more concrete role for the voice of parents and community in the process of determining outcomes for which the district will be responsible, and the state support needed to achieve them.

The current amendments call on the local educational entity only to ensure "open communications" with parents and community representatives, and say that these may be provided during the public budget process. Simply communicating with parents and the community is not sufficient. There needs to be clear direction providing for parent and community voices in the planning and decision making as well.

- Greater attention to how those outcomes that are not encompassed by OAKS but clearly are key to college and career success will be both embraced and assessed from the very start of this process.

An extended vision setting process involving some 500 people in my district found this set of outcomes to be the highest priority for our children:

Critical Thinking
Problem Solving
Communication

While most of these are addressed in the emerging common core standards for schools, precious few of them are measured by the current standardized tests which seem likely to dominate the assessment of outcomes in the emerging Achievement Compacts.

I would remind us all that what gets measured is what gets taught. Please do not allow us to be in such a hurry to become outcomes based that we effectively ignore the very things that parents and community value the most.

Thank you for your consideration.

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