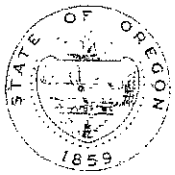
MARK HASS
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 14



COMMITTEES:
Education & Workforce Development, Chair
Environment & Natural Resources
Finance & Revenue

OREGON STATE SENATE

February 27, 2012

Honorable John A. Kitzhaber
Office of the Governor
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Governor Kitzhaber:

We need a new approach to student assessment in Oregon. For that reason, in 2009 we joined with our colleagues to unanimously support HB 2362, which permitted Oregon school districts to access assessments that are tailored to individual student achievement. The current Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) administered by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is confined to assessing students solely with respect to grade level status and provides no actionable information to advance instruction.

In 2009 we were on the vanguard of the education transformation you sought in SB 909 (2011) and SB 1581 (2012) with the local innovation and district choice embedded in HB 2362. Even with the total support of the entire Legislature in 2009, there has been no progress made by ODE to even inform school districts of their student assessment options, let alone assist districts to access student-centered assessments as we intended. It has been and remains the position of ODE that all decisions must be made by ODE, and all assessments must be created and administered by them. In our view, this "one size fits all" approach is one of the reasons student performance in Oregon has declined so tragically during the past decade.

For this reason we supported an amendment to Section 15 of SB 1581 that is in the A-Engrossed version of the bill which reads as follows:

> (c) May direct the State Board of Education to waive, as permitted by federal law, implementation of the statewide assessment system described in ORS 329.485 (4)(a) and implement, in lieu of the statewide assessment system, the assessment system described in ORS 329.485 (3) to provide achievement compact performance measures

Your office has informed us that you plan to advance an amendment that eliminates this section of the bill due to the fiscal impact statement submitted by ODE. The fiscal impact statement

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appears more designed to block this shift in policy rather than to gage its true cost. We recommend that you consider the following actions to address the serious concerns we and many of our fellow legislators have about the status of student assessment in Oregon. These are as follows:

- Instruct ODE to delay a new Request for Proposal (RFP) on statewide assessments until fall 2013 to allow time for the policies and processes articulated in SB 909 and SB 1581 to take shape and to allow time for Oregon's Chief Education Officer to evaluate the current assessment landscape in Oregon.

- Direct the State Board of Education, Oregon Department of Education and Chief Education Officer to inform school districts of the availability of the assessment systems described in ORS 329.485(3), particularly in the context of measuring achievement compact performance.

- Working with ODE, the State Board of Education, the OEIB, the Chief Education Officer and school district officials, develop an administrative method and a funding model for both accountability assessments and the formative assessment system described in ORS 329.485(3) , or a blended model, to ensure school districts that choose to use an alternate assessment system have a process and resources to implement such an assessment system, particularly for achievement compact measures.

These steps and others are essential to reforming student assessment in Oregon and ensuring the achievement compacts in SB 1581 accomplish their stated goal of improving learning of all Oregon students. We believe these steps fit with your powerful leadership and vision for education.

Sincerely,

Senator Mark Hass
Senate District 14

Representative Betty Komp
House District 22

cc: Tim Nesbitt
Governor's Office