Members of the Oregon Education Investment Board,

My name is Dana Hepper, and I'm the Advocacy Director for Stand for Children. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding K-12 Achievement Compacts. Stand for Children supported SB 1581 during the 2012 session to create Achievement Compacts. We are also proud to be a member of a growing coalition of advocacy and communities of color organizations looking at how to ensure equity in our public schools. I will provide testimony for Stand from both of these vantage points.

Stand for Children supported SB 1581 because we believe that Achievement Compacts can be a powerful tool to improve student learning. Effective school districts, who are demonstrating amazing learning among students, consistently set clear, quantifiable targets and commit to them with unrelenting focus. Achievement Compacts ensure all districts adopt this effective practice. Stand for Children would like to make three points with regard to how the Compacts need to be structured to improve student learning:

- Compacts should <u>include short- and long-term targets</u> for student learning. It takes more than one year and one teacher to ensure each child is on a path toward high school graduation and college. It requires sustained focus. We understand the concerns expressed about holding school districts accountable to the long-term goals because of the variety of factors that are outside of their control. However, long-term goals are critical to ensuring districts and the state are focused on each child is getting what he or she needs, year after year.

- We support the metrics in the Compacts being <u>student outcomes</u> – not school district inputs – while recognizing that any analysis of these outputs is absolutely going to consider the inputs. For example, Stand has been looking at the Reynolds and David Douglas School Districts. We've chosen these two because they both have 80%+ students in poverty, 50%+ students of color, and 20%+ English Language Learners. Yet, in almost every category, David Douglas students are demonstrating proficiency at rates 10-20% higher than Reynolds students.

  So we know that all students can learn, and that under equally constrained budgets some school districts are demonstrating greater student learning than others. The Compacts are the place we can find out what is working right now. If we bog these Compacts down with too much information about inputs, they'll lose their potential effectiveness.

- We feel a strong sense of urgency to <u>get started now</u>. The Compacts represent a commitment to our children that we are relentlessly focused on their learning and figuring out what it takes to get them what they need. Students get this message from many of the individuals working in schools every day – they need the state to make the same commitment now.

As I mentioned, I've also been part of a coalition striving to improve equity in education. I'd like to speak specifically to the disaggregation of data in the Achievement Compacts. We were pleased to see SB 1581 so explicitly call out underserved student populations. I'd also like to make three points relating to equity and the Compacts.

- <u>We support the detailed disaggregation of data</u> in the sample Compact. Previous versions of the Compacts used an aggregate 'underserved' category as a way to track district progress in closing achievement gaps. However, aggregated data masks some of the disparities that can exist

between underserved populations. This is often the case for Asian and Pacific Islander students. High rates of success among Chinese and Japanese students often mask real challenges facing Hmong, Vietnamese, and other Asian or Pacific Islander students. Disparities between students who speak English and those learning English is another key distinction – a district could do well on an aggregated measure by serving the needs of one of these populations without serving the needs of the other. We have to be clear that we can't leave any group of students out of the progress made by a district.

- We also support detailed goal-setting for each disaggregated subgroup. Because different populations of students may have vastly different realities, they require unique sets of strategies to maximize their learning. This means school districts need to create tailored interventions to meet the unique needs of a diverse body of students. If we do not set clear goals and track our progress for each population of students, it is too easy to put some students on the backburner once again. When districts set these goals, those will access to strong community organizations will have an incentive to enter into powerful partnerships to meet the needs of students' of color, students living in poverty, and students learning English.

- Finally, we ask you to stay focused on closing the achievement gap. SB 1581 was clear on this point. It says, "The target number and percentage of students must reflect the education entity's goals of improving education outcomes for disadvantaged student groups and closing any student achievement gaps between disadvantaged student groups and other student groups." We will be here to help ensure all students benefit from the leadership of this board.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Dana Hepper
Oregon Advocacy Director
Stand for Children