



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 10, 2019

To: [Joint Committee On Student Success](#)
Co-Chair Senator Arnie Roblan
Co-Chair Representative Barbara Smith Warner
Co-Vice Chair Senator Tim Knopp
Co-Vice Chair Representative Greg Smith
[jcss exhibit email](#)

Re: [HB 2019](#) (as presented 4-9-19) – Student Success – **Comments**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon has Positions in tax policy and child well-being that address the provisions of this bill.

- LWVOR believes any tax proposal should be evaluated with regard to its effect on the entire tax structure. The League supports a tax system that is based on ability to pay, but that applies a benefits-received principle wherever reasonable and that recognizes the role of social expediency.
- LWVOR supports policies, programs, and funding at all levels of the community and government that promote the well-being, encourage the full development, and ensure the safety of all children. We believe that the early years of a child's life are crucial in building the foundation for educational attainment and greatly impact success or failure in later life. LWV is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

LWVOR commends the thoughtful and well-researched efforts of the Joint Committee on Student Success. You have laid solid groundwork for the bill before us today as you met for more than a year, held meetings with students, educators and other stakeholders throughout the state, and listened to experts from Oregon and beyond.

You have recognized that a new dedicated funding source is needed, proposing the Fund for Student Success. You have explored with the Legislative Revenue Office and stakeholders various tax models that offer stable funding for education while not impacting existing revenues that flow through the General Fund for other essential services that are vital to Oregon including: health care, social services, public safety, and natural resources.

We realize that it is difficult to craft legislation to comprehensively address the huge task you have been charged to address. As we consider the various components of the lengthy bill and anticipate future amendments, we look forward to providing additional detailed testimony and working with you and various stakeholder coalitions to support Student Success policies and funding. **We urge a timeframe that will allow for additional testimony as amendments evolve to address this complex bill. Our initial feedback is in the attachment, addressing sections of the bill.**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation and for your dedication to Student Success in Oregon.



Norman Turrill
LWVOR President

Maud Naroll
Revenue Policy
Coordinator

Chris Vogel
Education Policy
Coordinator

Stephanie Feeney
Early Learning
Portfolio

Cc: JCSS Committee Members: Senators Lew Frederick, Mark Hass, Kathleen Taylor, Kim Thatcher, and Chuck Thomsen; Representative Brian Clem, Julie Fahey, Cheri Helt, Diego Hernandez, John Lively, Nancy Nathanson, and Sherrie Sprenger
Senate President Peter Courtney
House Speaker Tina Kotek
Governor Kate Brown
Director of the Oregon Department of Education Colt Gill

Attachment: Specific comments follow on sections of [HB 2019-6](#) (as presented 4-9-19).



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

Attachment to League testimony for JCSS 4-11-2019:

Specific comments follow on sections of [HB 2019-6](#) (as presented 4-9-19). **We urge a timeframe that will allow for additional testimony as amendments evolve to address this complex bill. Our initial feedback follows, addressing sections of the bill.**

Re Work of the Student Success Revenue Sub-Committee:

We support the Sub-Committee's proposal for a new business tax and its progressive nature, taxing businesses equitably across business structures, with no need for small businesses with revenue under \$150,000 to file at all, a small fixed fee for businesses grossing between \$150,000 and \$1 million in Oregon revenue, and tax based on Oregon revenue over \$1 million. We also support pairing the new tax with progressive tax cuts for individuals. Oregon businesses benefit from a literate workforce. LWVOR supports businesses contributing more to educating their future work force.

SECTION 10 re "Awarding of grants from District Improvement Account; eligible uses of grants; calculation of grants; rules."

LWVOR commends the inclusion of these eligible uses:

- Meet students' mental or behavioral health needs;
- Reducing academic disparities for economically disadvantaged students, students from racial or ethnic groups that have historically experienced academic disparities, students with disabilities, and students who are English language learners.

The League appreciates that grant allowed spending includes:

- Grants spent on addressing students' health or safety needs, which may include: social-emotional learning and development; student mental and behavioral health; student health and wellness; trauma-informed practices; school health professionals and assistants; expanding student access to and participation in well-rounded learning experiences; dropout prevention programs; and transition supports.

SECTIONS 11-17 re grants from the District Improvement Account

LWVOR acknowledges the fine line between having enough data to measure student success and the desire to minimize onerous record keeping. Pulling school staff time away from teaching and aiding students to collect numbers and fill out forms is counterproductive to the overarching goal of improving students' education, so we recommend tracking only the most relevant student and district data and not overburdening the grant process.

In Section 13 ODE is placed in an enforcement role. While there is a need for monitoring fiscal responsibility and measurable outcomes, it is best to promote a collegial partnership with districts rather than create an overbearing ODE. The student success teams should include experienced classroom teachers along with others listed. Ideally the District and ODE should mutually agree upon some of the team members rather than ODE appointing all.

SECTIONS 26-27 re the Statewide Initiative Account

The League appreciates that designated uses are defined and urges ongoing vigor to assure administrative costs are lean and efficient allowing more direct services at the local level for students. As the ODE plans allocation of the Statewide Initiative Account, and the State Board of Education adopts rules necessary for the administration of this section, some Legislative oversight should continue to assure that these various SIA purposes are balanced yet flexible to meet evolving priorities. Otherwise, some may be marginalized at the expense of others—what is the balancing mechanism?

- “Department of Education shall use moneys in the Statewide Initiative Account for the following purposes:
 - Funding the High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness Act at the levels prescribed by ORS 327.856;
 - Expanding school breakfast and lunch programs;
 - Operating youth reengagement programs or providing youth reengagement services;
 - Funding high cost disabilities grants under ORS 327.348;
 - Establishing and maintaining Statewide School Safety;
 - Developing and providing statewide equity initiatives, as identified by the Department of Education;
 - Planning for increased transparency and accountability in the public education system of the state;
 - Funding student success teams established under section 13 of this 2019 Act; and
 - Funding administrative costs incurred by the Department of Education and the Early Learning Division in implementing this section and sections 9 to 16 and 30 of this 2019 Act.”

SECTIONS 29 and 30 re Early Learning Account

The items included in this bill represent a good starting place but fail to address all of the needs in our communities. Provisions for an early learning system should not be limited to these functions. The League recommends attention to these important items.

1. Increased investment in programs for children birth to age three. Currently only a small percentage of eligible children in this age group have access to programs. Research has demonstrated that providing support for children and their families in the earliest years produces significant benefits in a child’s life trajectory.
2. Develop early learning system infrastructure, first aligning the various professional development systems for teachers of young children. Currently teacher education is provided in three largely uncoordinated ways—child care research and referral agencies, two-year colleges, and four-year colleges. In order to have a strong, competent early education workforce these programs need to be aligned into a seamless system.

We encourage funding of all six of these provisions: early childhood special education and early intervention, relief nurseries, culturally specific programs, high quality preschool programs, professional development for teachers and programs for children birth-age three. Each makes a valuable contribution to the development and learning of children in Oregon. All are important components of a system that offers a balanced approach to providing for young children and families who have been historically underserved in Oregon.

The funding recommended in this bill will increase the number of children being served, and at the same time begin the process of building a coordinated early learning system. We wish to stress that the bill’s provisions reinforce each other and that each one has important benefits for children, families and teachers. In order to achieve long-term benefit, we recommend that the pieces of this fund be kept together and that each receives a percentage of the funding consistent with legislative intent.

SECTION 31 re Statewide School Safety and Prevention System

The League commends the collaborative aspects of this section between the Oregon Health Authority, representatives of school districts, education service districts, school employees, human services, mental health professionals and law enforcement agencies. We suggest that representative classroom teachers, students and parents should also participate in rule-making with the State Board of Education.

SECTION 32. Youth Reengagement Program

Youth reengagement is a good investment to avoid delinquency and criminal behavior. The education system has the responsibility of producing self-managing and self-supporting young adults. See 2019 LWVOR testimony on [HB 5015](#) [HB 5015 ODE - Testimony - LWVOR Vogel](#)

SECTION 37 re Early Childhood Equity Fund

Members of culturally specific organizations testified eloquently to the Sub-Committee on Early Childhood Education that they wished to develop the programs and services they believe will best benefit the children of their community. We are particularly supportive of Sections 37 and 38, creating an Early Childhood Equity Fund to do just that. LWVOR appreciates this dedicated fund as part of Early Learning and offered supportive testimony [Norman Turrill and Chris Vogel \(testimony\)](#) on [HB 2897](#). We appreciate inclusion of this important legislation within this bill.

SECTIONS 40-41 Statewide Equity Initiatives

The League commends the inclusion of equity initiatives based on the fact that Oregon's **African American, Hispanic, and Native American** students have higher dropout rates and lower graduation rates than their White or Asian peers. [ODE Equity Initiatives](#)

We believe that all relevant culturally specific groups should be included in these provisions and recommend re-wording to ensure that sections address each of these groups consistently. Section 40 addresses American Indian and Alaskan Native students. Section 41 addresses Latino or Hispanic students. Because the two sections originated as separate bills, the language is inconsistent and disjointed.

[House Bill 2016](#) from 2017 directs the Department of Education to develop and implement a statewide education plan for **African American/Black** students who are in early childhood through post-secondary education programs. LWVOR would recommend incorporating this bill, already in statute, into the current “big bill”.

We are also concerned about **Immigrant and Refugee** students. Should a section be dedicated to this group? Rulemaking advisors to the State Board of Education would benefit by including a community-based organization such as the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO <https://irco.org/>) to address the needs of these students.