



OREGON CITY SCHOOLS FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Senate Education Committee

SB 358 Proponent Testimony

Presented by Terri Hook, Master Teacher, Oregon City Schools Lead Teacher

President, Oregon City Federation of Teachers

September 23, 2020

Chair Lehner and Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Education Committee. I am Terri Hook, a Master Teacher, lead teacher, instructional mentor, President of the Oregon City Federation of Teachers and Chair of the OFT Education Issues Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB 358 which addresses accountability measures that need to be modified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**I support the provisions in SB 358 for many reasons, but for today I will focus on the following two provisions that I deal with closely every school day as a primary focus in my position as the lead teacher for the Oregon City Schools.**

**The first provision is:**

- 1. Seek federal waivers from high stakes testing and hold districts harmless from 2020-2021 report card benchmarks**

Educators and students should not need to be subjected to state testing this school year. First, how can high stakes tests be administered if a school district or buildings within a school district are fully remote due to high positivity and exposure rates? Also, school districts across the state have re-opened in many different models. They may even be transitioning from one model to the next and back again through the course of the year. My own district will be fully remote for two more weeks; then we change to two weeks of a hybrid model; then two weeks after that we plan to transition to having all students in-person all five days. Without consistency of instructional styles, mastery of academic content will be difficult to achieve.

Of course, teachers all across the state will work diligently to meet the educational needs of our students no matter which style of instruction is adopted,

but during this pandemic the health and safety of our students, their families, school personnel and our communities needs to be a priority. The focus on establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships with students and their families and keeping them safe during this public health crisis means that in-person learning may be limited or not available at all. Our Ohio Department of Education's Strategic Plan emphasizes that the social and emotional needs of our students need to be at the forefront of a child's school experience. In addition to meeting students' social emotional needs, teachers, school counselors and principals are making it a priority to determine students' skill levels in core subjects. We are working on ways to plan and deliver instruction to meet students where they are in many different instructional settings.

High stakes testing has never been useful to inform day to day current year instruction. Rather, it has been used for accountability - labeling schools and school districts. However, how accurate will the results be when instruction is interrupted with the potential of students volleying back and forth between face to face instruction, hybrid models and total remote learning? It is unfair to put pressure on students, their families, and educators to subject them to high stakes testing during these difficult times. The results of high stakes testing each year give us the same outcomes. Poverty is linked to below expected test results. The pandemic is already proving to affect students living in poverty disproportionately to those that do not. It exacerbates the inequities in our system. This school year will not be a level playing field for our students, especially those we already know are at higher risk academically. Neither is it a level playing field for teachers across the state. We need to spend the precious time we do have with our students giving them what they need most: teachers, school counselors, principals and support staff in a safe environment that will grow their love of learning, allow them to express their learning in productive ways and provide them with skills needed to adapt in an ever changing world. Formative instructional practices that include pre-assessing students, using data to inform instruction, delivering instruction, reassessing for mastery in real time will be of more benefit to students than any result of high stakes tests.

## **2. Suspend evaluation of teachers for FY20-21**

I am a credentialed evaluator for both the original OTES 1.0 framework and now the OTES 2.0 framework. I am also the instructional mentor for our resident educators. I am in classrooms daily observing, coaching and mentoring teachers. As the lead teacher, I work together with our district superintendent to implement and oversee all components of OTES for our district. I not only support our teachers and school counselors through their evaluation processes, but our district's credentialed evaluators also consult with me about the OTES process. I am in a position to see how this process affects all parties involved.

I need to share with you all today, that never before in my 37-year career in education have I witnessed my colleagues so concerned about an event as life altering and professionally altering as the Covid-19 pandemic. Are my colleagues trying to adjust and adapt? Yes. I will even go further and attest to their innovativeness and willingness to try countless new instructional strategies in order to be able to bring worthwhile learning to their students. As dedicated professionals, many have and are continuing to attempt to meet the needs of their students using tried and true strategies, as well as newly acquired methods. I am now seeing teachers at all rating levels experiencing frustration. I hear teachers say they have never worked so hard under these uncertain circumstances and they are worried about being judged on their abilities to be able to perform the responsibilities of their job when they are in fact, learning daily. Evaluations for the 2020-2021 school year need to be suspended because the fundamentals of teaching and learning for most teachers and counselors will be very difficult to deliver this year given the expectations of the multi-tiered OTES and OSCES rubrics. Specific rubric indicators may be difficult to observe and demonstrate in a remote or hybrid environment. With the different re-opening plans being utilized by districts across the state, how can observations continue objectively if one observation is during a hybrid setting and then the second observation needs to occur when teaching and learning shifts to a remote setting? There is serious question as to how areas of the rubric can be demonstrated in remote and hybrid observations. How will "walkthroughs" be conducted effectively? Without face to face classrooms, how can observations be successfully and accurately conducted?

A final reason to suspend OTES this year is the extreme pressure principals and other evaluators already feel to keep students and staff safe during the teaching and learning process. A better use of administrative time would be for there to be

a heightened focus on building management in order keep us all as safe as possible while fielding and responding to the constant flow of communication with the community and staff that the pandemic has created. This does not mean that teachers can be observed and supported – just not in a formal evaluation setting that may produce ratings that are inaccurate. Why put this added pressure on educators – the evaluated as well as the evaluators? As one of my fellow colleagues shared with me...we can right the OTES ship when the storm is over.

Thank you for considering my views and I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have.