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## **Democrats Champion Historic Gains for Oregon Students, K-12 Schools, Affordable Child Care**

*Governor signs into law record funding for K-12 education, educator training and retention, the Early Literacy Success Initiative, the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Student Success Plan, civil rights protections, and child care infrastructure*

**SALEM, Ore.** - During the 2023 legislative session, Democrats championed historic gains for Oregon's K-12 schools and students and made critical investments in Oregon's child care infrastructure to support working families. With these investments, legislators are working to ensure every child in Oregon has a safe, nurturing place to learn and grow from cradle to career.

Today, legislators who championed these efforts joined Governor Tina Kotek as she signed [House Bill 5015](#), [Senate Bill 283](#), [House Bill 3198](#), [House Bill 3005](#), [House Bill 3144](#), [House Bill 2281](#), and [Senate Bill 1050](#) into law.

"Student success and workforce support have been core to our work this session. These bills, and many others, take significant strides toward meaningful outcomes. While the work will be ongoing, the policies and investments we celebrate today will serve to stabilize quality education throughout Oregon. These critically needed resources will help us address our schools' most pressing challenges." **said Representative Courtney Neron (D-Wilsonville, Sherwood, King City, Tigard/Bull Mountain & Parrett Mountain)**, chair of the House Education Committee and an educator. "We must fund our expectations of our education system from cradle to career and this session's investments are a testament to that commitment."

“We achieved historic wins for Oregon students and schools in the 2023 session. I’m particularly proud of the strides we’re making to attract, retain, and train world-class educators and guarantee every kid graduates with basic life skills, like reading. Supporting our students and the educators and staff in our schools is, hands down, the smartest investment we can make for the future of our state,” **said Senator Michael Dembrow (D-Portland)**, chair of the Senate Education Committee and college professor.

### **Record K-12 School Funding** ([House Bill 5015](#))

HB 5015 makes a historic \$10.2 billion investment in the K-12 State School Fund for the 2023-2025 biennium, nearly \$1 billion higher than the current service level. When paired with local property tax revenues, total resources for K-12 schools for this biennium reach an unprecedented \$15.3 billion. This record investment makes sure Oregon schools have the tools they need to set students up for success inside the classroom.

“Our students, educators, and school staff are dealing with never-before-seen challenges right now, and it’s our duty to provide them with the resources and support they need to adapt. This historic investment will help our schools bridge the gaps and meet students’ needs so every Oregonian is set up for success,” **said Senator Lew Frederick (D-Portland)**, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education.

“This record funding is going to be a game changer for Oregon’s school districts and will make sure students have their needs fully met as they recover from the learning interruptions we saw during the last few years due to the pandemic and its technological, social, and emotional challenges,” **said Representative Susan McLain (D-Western Washington County)**, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education.

The State School Fund is the primary funding source for the general operations of school districts and education service districts, paying for a range of needs, including teacher salaries, textbooks, school supplies, desks, and building maintenance. These 197 districts serve more than 552,000 Oregon students in K-12 schools.

### **Strengthening Oregon’s Educator Workforce** ([Senate Bill 283](#))

SB 283 addresses Oregon’s K-12 educator workforce shortage. A key part of improving student success is making sure educators have good salaries, healthy working conditions, and the resources they need to help Oregon’s children learn.

The bill addresses the concerns and suggestions raised by educators and administrators across the state by:

- Creating a robust, statewide educator workforce data system and regular workforce surveys to improve collection, quality, and availability of data related to Oregon's education workforce;
- Establishing apprenticeship and mentorship grants to pay Oregonians to become teachers and improve diversity in the state's educator workforce;
- Allowing school districts to boost pay for teachers and classified staff who work in special education;
- Addressing the issue of districts under-employing workers serving students with the highest needs by requiring a minimum of 25 hours per week and just cause protections for classified jobs;
- Paying for substitute teacher training and allowing recently retired teachers to convert to substitute licenses at no charge;
- Directing the Oregon Department of Education to study and plan for statewide minimum salaries for education workforces.

"Our teachers and highly skilled professional school support staff carry Oregon's future on their shoulders. Their jobs aren't getting any easier. The solutions signed into law today provide crucial support to educators, especially classified staff working in special education. Increased training, more competitive salaries and improved support systems will elevate educator workplace satisfaction and improve the school experience for students," **said Senator Sara Gelsler Blouin (D-Corvallis)**, member of the Senate Education Committee.

"All of us remember the educators and staff we looked up to most when we were in school and the important role they played in our education and development," **said Representative Zach Hudson (D-East Multnomah County)**, a teacher in Oregon's K-12 schools and vice chair of the House Education Committee. "When teachers and school staff have the support they need to do their jobs, students will get the support they need to succeed and grow."

### **Early Literacy Success Initiative** ([House Bill 3198](#))

HB 3198, the Early Literacy Success Initiative, invests in culturally-responsive and research-aligned reading instruction in Oregon classrooms. It also develops and expands student and family-centered early literacy supports. In-school funding for the initiative goes toward literacy coaching and professional development for educators, tutoring, curriculum implementation and adoption and summer learning programming.

"While more work lies ahead, the Early Literacy Success Initiative is an important step forward in addressing our state's literacy crisis," **said Representative Jason Kropf**

**(D-Bend)**, a chief sponsor of HB 3198. “We need to make sure our kids are receiving evidence-based literacy instruction and that our educators and communities have the training and resources they need to support students as they develop critical literacy skills.”

More than [half of Oregonian third graders](#) are not proficient at reading, with greater disparities among BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People Of Color) and rural communities. Research shows that [75% of students who are not proficient](#) by third grade will never fully catch up, with later interventions being more costly and less effective.

“Every Oregon kid deserves a fair shot to succeed in life, but too many of them are getting left behind because they’re not getting what they need to develop basic reading skills,” **said Senator Janeen Sollman (D - Hillsboro)**, a chief sponsor of HB 3198. “Oregonians know that this is an absolutely critical investment, and I’m glad we could deliver.”

Investing in early literacy has been shown to have long-term [positive impacts](#) on state graduation rates, preventing dropouts and helping students succeed.

The Early Literacy Success Initiative invests \$144.3 million across three new grant programs: the Early Literacy Success School Grant, the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, and the Early Literacy Success Community Grant.

### **Accessible, Affordable Child Care** ([House Bill 3005](#))

Early learning and child care are critical to a young child’s development. But right now, every Oregon county is a [child care desert](#), lacking quality and adequate care for infants and toddlers. Democrats responded this session with the [\\$167 Million Early Childhood Budget Package](#) to help address the cost-of-living crisis, reduce child poverty, and support systemic investments in working families.

A part of this package, HB 3005 invests \$50 million to make it easier to build, renovate, and expand child care and preschool facilities across the state. Across Oregon, the costs to open and maintain child care services are too high for many providers. This financial boost makes it easier for new programs to open and existing programs to expand.

The bill increases child care availability by creating a grant and loan program within the Oregon Business Development Department (Business Oregon) to provide financial assistance to new child care programs looking to grow capacity.

“As a pediatrician and a mom, I know how important it is for families to have access to resources and child care during their kids’ formative years,” **said Representative Lisa Reynolds (D-Washington County)**, chief sponsor of HB 3005 and chair of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services. “By investing in our child care

infrastructure, we are helping make sure we have the facilities, the highly trained workforce and the subsidies we need to provide quality child care for every family in Oregon. Childcare is the work that allows all other work to happen, and access to childcare changes the poverty trajectory for Oregon families.”

“We know that by the time many kids make it to kindergarten, they’re already falling behind their peers because they didn’t have access to early learning opportunities. Child care centers that provide early learning opportunities to Oregon kids are absolutely critical, and when parents don’t have to work multiple jobs just to afford child care, they have more time at home to nurture their kids. This investment will make a huge difference for Oregonians,” **said Senator Elizabeth Steiner (D-NW Portland)**, a family physician who championed child care efforts in the Senate in 2023.

“As a working parent, I deeply understand the struggle we face to find affordable, quality child care while also paying childcare workers a living wage with competitive benefits. Now is the time we need to invest in the profession that makes all professions possible,” **said Representative Annessa Hartman (D-Gladstone, Oregon City & N Clackamas County)**, member of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services.

“Working families in Oregon are stretching every penny to keep up with rising prices and out-of-control child care costs are making it even harder,” **said Senator Mark Meek (D-Clackamas County)**, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Tax Expenditures. “By opening up more child care centers in more communities, we’re creating competition that will drive down costs, commute times, and transportation bills for parents around Oregon.”

**[Inclusive, Thriving Schools for All Students](#)** ([House Bill 3144](#), [House Bill 2281](#), [Senate Bill 1050](#))

Creating a safe, inclusive school environment that increases and supports student and educator diversity and helps close learning disparities among underrepresented students is a top priority for Democrats.

HB 3144, the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Student Success Plan, addresses the academic opportunity gap hurting Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NH/PI) students. The Oregon Department of Education [reports](#) that NH/PI students have the second highest drop rates among all races in Oregon and the highest rate of chronic absenteeism.

“This bill is not only a critical investment in education, but an acknowledgment that we see Pacific Islander students and recognize the assets they bring into our classrooms and communities,” **said Representative Hoa Nguyen (D-East Portland and Damascus)**, a chief sponsor of HB 3144 who also works as a Student and Community Engagement Specialist at the Clackamas Education Service District. “With 12,000 students, Oregon has one of the largest Pacific Islander populations in the country. As this number grows,

we must work towards an equitable educational system that is shaped by and serves our community.”

“When students start falling through the cracks, the whole system suffers. By acknowledging that our education system was not built to serve Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students and working to better serve them, we will make a huge impact on those students’ lives and the lives of their families and peers,” **said Senator Kayse Jama (D-Portland)**, a chief sponsor of HB 3144.

The NH/PI Student Success Plan invests \$2.1 million in targeted interventions to improve access to educational opportunities for Oregon’s NH/PI students. This will address the disproportionate rate of disciplinary incidents of NH/PI students, increase parental engagement, encourage NH/PI students to join after-school activities, and improve NH/PI student literacy levels in K-3 levels.

HB 2281 makes sure civil rights are protected in schools by ensuring there is a designated civil rights coordinator within each school district. Coordinators will be tasked with efforts to prevent discrimination, provide guidance on civil rights issues, and monitor compliance with state and federal laws.

The passage of this bill comes in response to a notable surge in discrimination complaints within public education. Over the past few years, the Oregon Department of Education has observed a staggering [450% increase in discrimination complaints](#).

“Today, many Black and Brown low-income students continue to face discrimination in the classroom, impeding on our children’s ability to succeed,” **said Representative Andrea Valderrama (D-Outer East Portland)**, a former school board member and member of the House Education Committee. “All students deserve to be seen, valued and feel safe in their classrooms so they can learn and thrive. HB 2281 is a piece of the puzzle to how we get there.”

“At a time when LGBTQ+ and other vulnerable students are under attack across the nation, we’re shoring up protections here in Oregon,” **said Representative Ben Bowman (Tigard, Metzger & S Beaverton)**, a former school board chair. “This legislation is important so that students not only *feel* safe, but *are* safe in their place of learning.”

In 2019, the Legislature passed two laws (HB 2023 and SB 664), ensuring the State Board of Education would establish standards for ethnic studies, as well as Holocaust and genocide studies. SB 1050 makes sure both of these standards are implemented at the same time and that school districts have the necessary support to do so.

“I was proud to lead in 2019 on requiring Oregon schools to teach about the Holocaust and genocides. This session we took another step forward by requiring professional development on this subject, which will lead to better lessons for our students,” said

**Senate President Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego)**, chief sponsor of SB 1050. “Young people must learn about compassion and understanding, and teaching about the atrocities of the past will help to empower future leaders to ensure they never happen again.”

“We say, ‘Never forget. Never again,’ as a reminder of the atrocities of the Holocaust, one of the darkest chapters in history that took millions of innocent lives. But many forget that the Holocaust did not just happen overnight. It was the result of laws and injustices that slowly took away the humanity and rights of a number of different groups of people, including those in the Jewish community, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ communities,” **said Representative David Gomberg (D-Lincoln/Benton Counties)**, a proud member of Oregon’s Jewish community and chief sponsor of [HB 2905](#), which also passed during the 2023 session. This law adds Jewish communities to the list of marginalized communities whose histories and contributions must be taught in Oregon schools.

“At a time when we are seeing books banned, a rise in anti-Semitism, and other vulnerable communities targeted and maligned, understanding and having an accurate telling of our history in our classrooms is critical so that these horrific events never happen again,” **added Gomberg**.

Investing in education and child care is a top priority for Legislative Democrats, outlined in the House’s [Rebuilding for the Future](#) and Senate’s [Oregon Works](#) 2023 agendas. During the 2023 interim and the 2024 legislative session, Democrats are committed to building off of this session’s successes.

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