



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Senate approves legislation to lower compulsory school age, address truancy**

*Bills introduced by Hass, Gelser will improve student outcomes*

SALEM – The Senate approved two pieces of legislation this morning that modify education policies for Oregon students by supporting their success and reducing absenteeism.

Senate Bill 321 decreases Oregon’s compulsory school age from seven to six years of age, helping to combat Oregon’s notoriously high rate of absenteeism. Studies have demonstrated that delayed entry into the classroom can have a negative impact on students’ success, and that these early setbacks can be hard to overcome.

“The Department of Education says only a small percentage of kids come in at age seven, but the challenges for those kids are significant,” said Senator Mark Hass (D-Beaverton), chief sponsor of Senate Bill 321. “Experts say it is incredibly difficult for kids starting school at age seven to catch up with other kids who already have two years of school under their belt. These students will always be behind. They will always struggle. They are likely to fail. To me, this is the bottom line—it’s better to help give these children a good launch at the beginning instead of trying to rescue them at the end.”

Senate Bill 556 will prohibit Oregon schools from using expulsion as a disciplinary measure to address truancy.

“When kids aren’t showing up for school, it is a sign that students need more support. It makes no sense that current policy allows students to be expelled from school for being truant. We should be doing everything we can to throw open the doors of our schools to our most at risk kids—not creating new barriers that shut them out of learning,” said chief sponsor Senator Sara

Gelser (D-Corvallis). "SB 556 fixes this problem. It tells Oregon kids we want them in our schools and it will allow us to do everything we can to help all students succeed at school."

Passage of both bills reflect Senate Democrats' commitment to fighting for better outcomes for Oregon students. The bills will now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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