



## SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Free full-day kindergarten requirements pass in Senate** *SB 248 requires Oregon schools to offer program by 2015 school year*

SALEM – The Oregon Senate approved legislation this morning that will require school districts to implement full-day kindergarten for Oregon’s kids by the 2015-2016 school year. Currently, Oregon schools receive state funding for half-day kindergarten programs. Some schools that offer full-day programs charge tuition to participate. SB 248 will require all schools to offer free full-day kindergarten.

“Now, more than ever, Oregon’s children need a quality education,” said Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem/Woodburn/Gervais). “We can’t start early enough giving our children the education they need to succeed in life.”

Advocates for full-day kindergarten cite the long term benefit to children and society. Studies conclude that full-day kindergarten reduces the number of students that need costly remediation, reduces delinquency, reduces the early onset of drug and alcohol abuse, lowers crime and incarceration rates, and as a result saves taxpayer dollars in the long term.

“As an educator for over 46 years, I know that the more time spent in the classroom early on in a child’s life can make a serious positive impact on their success later on,” said Sen. Rod Monroe (D-Portland), a former history and government teacher. “Full-day kindergarten should be the standard, not the exception. I’m very pleased to cast this vote today and only hope that we can continue to set high standards for learning in the first years of our children’s education.”

Currently, most Title-I schools that qualify for federal funding offer full-day kindergarten, as do most private schools and schools in areas where parents can afford to pay supplemental tuition. Schools in middle class neighborhoods suffer by comparison.

“Middle class families continue to suffer through an almost embarrassing half day of kindergarten, where a five or six year old barely has enough time to take off his coat before he has to put it back on and get ready to go home,” said Senator Mark Hass (D-Beaverton), who carried the bill on the floor. “It’s time the state made full-day kindergarten official state policy for all Oregon children.”

SB 248 is the culmination of many years of work to address disparity amongst programs in Oregon and move Oregon toward a full-day kindergarten model. In 2009, the Legislature passed SB 44 which established

the Full-Day Kindergarten Implementation Committee to aid and advise the Legislature, school districts, and charter schools in developing and providing full day kindergarten programs throughout Oregon.

“Every session, Senate Democrats renew their commitment to fight for the best possible education for Oregon kids. This session is no exception and this bill is a good example of putting our words into action,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland).

The bill now goes to the House for consideration.

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