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OREGON SENATE REPUBLICANS

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Senate Republicans Roll Out Education Reform Agenda

As students struggle with school closures, bills would return educational opportunity

SALEM, Ore. – While schools across Oregon struggle to teach our students effectively, Senate Republicans have introduced school reform measures aimed at better serving students and families. These reforms would return educational opportunities to Oregon families. The package would assist in the recovery from failed distance learning and give more options for students to reach their full academic potential.

The bills range from giving families financial assistance for summer tutoring, increasing supporting families who chose alternative schooling and giving public schools consistent funding.

“No child should be trapped in schools that don’t meet their needs,” Senate Republican Leader, Fred Girod (R-Lyons) said. “There is no reason that our schools should still be closed. The science is clear: it is safe. We cannot wait any longer. Both the Biden Administration and the Center for Disease Control say it is safe for schools to reopen. The Governor has failed to act, now it is up to the legislature to act boldly for our students.”

“More and more families are realizing that they don’t have as much control over their education as they thought they did,” said Chuck Thomsen (R-Hood River), Vice-Chair of the Senate Education Committee. “School closures have them looking for viable alternatives. That’s what Senate Republicans are here to give them.”

“A ZIP code or school boundary should never determine a kid’s future,” Senator Dennis Linthicum (R-Kalamath Falls) said. “We must give students and families the educational freedom they deserve. These reforms will unlock our kids’ full potential.”

The failures of Oregon’s school system are well documented:

- Oregon is consistently in the bottom 5 in the country in graduation rates.
- [Barely 50%](#) of our students are proficient in reading and writing.
- Less than 40% are proficient in Math.

The impacts of school closures have also been well documented:

- Recent [research](#) indicates that students could lose \$12,000 to \$15,000 in future lifetime earnings each month schools are closed.
- School closures have [devastated](#) performance and learning.
- Suicide and mental health challenges due to isolation are [on the rise among youth](#).

“Too many families are feeling hopeless about schools being closed and the destructive impacts it has had on their kids’ futures,” Senator Tim Knopp (R-Bend) added. “Our students are the next generation of leaders,

innovators, business owners, and change-makers. We are doing them a disservice by not giving them real control over their education.”

“Our K-12 students are counting on us,” Senator Kim Thatcher (R-Keizer) added. “We must also bring down the cost of college and ensure that old regulations and a poor-performing public education system don’t hold back our students.”

“Our kids must be our top priority. The Legislature has sent more money to our public schools than ever, but we’ve not seen evidence that standards are being met to educate our kids well,” Senator Lynn Findley, Assistant Republican Leader (R-Vale) said. “It’s time for real reforms and real school choice. These measures will provide the opportunities and skills our kids need for their future.”

Bills in the education package include:

SB 462 (Girod) would establish a tax credit for college students trying to pay off their student loans.

SB 506 (Thatcher) reforms archaic licensing regulations that make it more difficult for Oregonians to get into good-paying trade jobs without a high school diploma.

SB 445 (Knopp) would establish a consistent and sufficient investment formula for public schools.

SB 504 (Thatcher) gives tuition and fee relief to the natural children of foster parents for service to our foster system.

SB 513 (Girod, Findley) would lay the groundwork for healthy democratic participation by requiring schools to proficiently teach civics.

SB 516 (Girod, Findley, Knopp, Thatcher) gives students and families control over their education by establishing a school voucher program.

SB 657 (Linthicum) increases the percentage of students who may enroll in virtual public schools.

SB 658 (Linthicum) establishes an education savings account program to give families tools to invest in their children’s futures.

SB 659 (Linthicum) would codify the principle that a ZIP code should not determine a child’s future by allowing them to attend any public school in the state.

SB 693 (Thatcher), known as the Education Equity Emergency Act, would create the Oregon Empowerment Scholarship Program to give students financial assistance and choices in their education.

SB 788 (Girod) establishes financial assistance for families who chose to home school.

Senator Chuck Thomsen (Hood River) has introduced the ‘Education Equity Act,’ which will give low-income and middle-class families financial aid in paying for summer tutoring to make up for lost learning due to ongoing school closures.

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