



*from the office of*

## **SENATOR CHUCK THOMSEN**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Senator Thomsen Introduces Education Equity Act**

*Bill will help struggling and low-income students catch up from school closures*

HOOD RIVER, Ore. – Senator Chuck Thomsen (R-Hood River), vice-chair of the Senate Education Committee, is introducing legislation that would assist families and students who have been suffering under school closures.

“The science is clear that school reopenings are safe,” Senator Thomsen said. “Unfortunately, politics have kept too many of our students locked out of the classroom, forcing them into a second-rate education.”

Under the legislation, the Restorative Equity Education Fund would be created and dedicate \$3 million to give low-income students access to financial assistance to pay for summer tutoring. To make up for lost learning, families could qualify for up to \$2,000 to pay for tutoring. Hours spent in tutoring would count towards graduation for high school students.

Others may qualify for a tax credit to put the cost of tutoring within reach for middle-class families.

“Oregon students have sacrificed a lot in the last year, but no student, regardless of ZIP code, race, income, or background should be denied access to quality education,” Senator Thomsen continued. “This bill will help families take back their education and make up for lost learning. Just because someone happens to live in a school district that, contrary to the science, refuses to reopen, does not mean they should have to bear the long-term consequences of a failed distance learning experiment.”

A recent [study](#) from the University of Pennsylvania concluded that the consequences of school closures have devastating effects on the futures of students. It estimates that kids grades 1 through 12 lose \$12,000 to \$15,000 of lifetime wages for every month schools are closed. Other [reports](#) have documented the devastating consequences on math and language learning. These

stats don't include the intangible consequences of suicide, deteriorating mental health, and stunted social skills.

“The pandemic has taught us a very difficult, but important lesson,” Thomsen added. “Parents and kids deserve control over their education. This session, the Legislature has an opportunity to commit ourselves to Oregonians' recovery. That is going to require creativity and real longer-term reforms to get our kids caught up and back on track, but this bill is a good start.”

The legislation is currently being drafted with Legislative Counsel and has not yet been assigned a bill number.

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