



**REPRESENTATIVE GENE WHISNANT
OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE DISTRICT 53**

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Contact: Preston Mann, 503-986-1009
preston.mann@state.or.us**

Oregon House Votes To Strengthen English Language Learner Program
*HB 3499 Directs Department Of Education To Reform And Improve Education Experience For
ELL Students*

Salem, OR – The Oregon House of Representatives today approved House Bill 3499, legislation that directs the Oregon Department of Education to begin developing a statewide plan for reporting on the progress of English language learner (ELL) students and establish a uniform, transparent process for tracking how ELL funds are spent.

“All Oregon students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, deserve access to a high-quality education experience,” said Representative Gene Whisnant (R-Sunriver), who helped draft the legislation as a chief co-sponsor of the bill. “Passing this bill is a critical step toward ensuring our English language learner students are receiving the resources and support they need while helping combat Oregon’s achievement gap.”

“This bill is a product of a diverse community of educators and advocates working together to improve outcomes for our students,” said Representative Joe Gallegos (D-Hillsboro), who co-chief sponsored the bill with Rep. Whisnant. “We have strong models across the state of schools and districts that are excelling at ELL instruction. Our goal with HB 3499 is to build a system that gives all students the tools needed to succeed.”

Oregon school districts currently receive an additional \$3,000 for each student identified as an English language learner. This money is allocated to school districts on the basis that it will be used to directly help ELL students succeed in the classroom. However, there is no specific rule governing how this money is spent and very limited information available about how effective the additional funds are at helping ELL students progress academically.

HB 3499 would require the Department of Education to establish two workgroups focused on improving the ELL student experience. The first group would be tasked with creating a standardized system for school districts to track and report ELL program spending. The second group would be charged with developing criteria for determining how effectively school districts are serving ELL students, deciding what metrics should be used to track academic growth and establishing guidelines for annual progress reports. The State Board of Education would then be required to adopt rules based on the recommendations of the workgroups.

“English language learners are one of Oregon’s fastest growing student populations,” continued Rep. Whisnant. “By establishing clear and transparent guidelines for reporting on the progress of our ELL initiatives, we can make more informed decisions about how to best serve these students.”

Along with Rep. Whisnant and Rep. Gallegos, HB 3499 was sponsored by a bipartisan group of lawmakers and supported by a coalition of education advocacy groups including the Oregon Alliance For Education Equity, Stand For Children and the Chalkboard Project. The bill now moves to the Senate for further consideration.

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