



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

For Immediate Release

Friday, July 7, 2017

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Rep. Whisnant Advocates for PK-12 Education During 2017 Session
Passes Bills Concerning School Nursing Services, Teacher Training, and Students' Needs

Salem, Ore. – During the 2017 Legislative Session, State Representative Gene Whisnant (R-Sunriver) has fought to address numerous issues within Oregon's PK-12 education system, continuing efforts he started during previous sessions.

Rep. Whisnant played a key role in passing [HB 3000](#) during the 2013 Session, which required that students entering Oregon's public education system receive a visual screening or eye exam. This year, he sponsored and amended [SB 187](#) to ensure that the requirements from HB 3000 are protected, while securing funding for non-profit organizations such as the Lions Club to provide follow-up screenings during subsequent years.

Last year, Rep. Whisnant served with State Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham) on a task force created to investigate how the State can increase the number of school nurses in its public schools. Currently, Oregon's nurse-to-student ratio is far below national benchmarks. To correct this, Rep. Whisnant and Sen. Monnes Anderson introduced [SB 111](#), which would create a program to assist school and educational service districts in billing Medicaid more comprehensively for the school nursing services they provide. This has the potential to yield an additional \$40 million in Federal funds per biennium, which could then be used by these districts to employ more school nurses.

"I believe students have a more difficult time learning if they are experiencing untreated health issues," said Rep. Whisnant. "That is why I am proud of the work we have done to pass both SB 187 and SB 111 in their current forms this session."

In meetings with Oregon's 2016 Teacher of the Year, Heather Anderson, Rep. Whisnant learned that only 1% of Oregon's teachers have earned their National Board Certification. Working with Anderson and other teachers from the Bend area, including Amy Sabbadini, as well as Co-Chief Sponsor Barbara Smith Warner (D-Portland) and a variety of other stakeholders, Rep. Whisnant introduced [HB 2673](#) this session, which will allocate \$1.7 million in an attempt to encourage at least 10% of Oregon's teachers to obtain their National Board Certification.

Rep. Whisnant also joined House Speaker Tina Kotek (D-Portland) as a co-chief sponsor of [HB 3358](#) this session, which will establish an "advisory group" to report to the Legislature on the Department of Education's progress toward improving Oregon's English Language Learner programs as required by [HB 3499](#), which Rep. Whisnant sponsored during the 2015 Session. Finally, Rep. Whisnant introduced [HB 3216](#) this session, which will require the Governor's Chief Education Office to study the various ways in which Oregon's public education system can better serve students from families in poverty.

"I am proud of the work we have done this year to better ensure that our public education system provides students with the greatest opportunities for success and that it is responsive to students' individual needs," said Rep. Whisnant. "Time and again, the people of Oregon have told us that their highest priority is the education of our children. I look forward to our elected leaders building upon this work during future legislative sessions to reflect that charge."

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