

2/6/2024

Chair Neron, and members of the House Committee on Education,

My name is Erin Whitlock, and I am a former special educator and behavior specialist from Springfield Public Schools, as well as a Professional Practice Consultant for the Oregon Education Association's Center for Public Affairs and Professional Excellence. In my role at Oregon Education Association (OEA), I have the privilege and honor to be the staff liaison for OEA's Special Education Committee, which is a committee of special educators throughout the state tasked with supporting educators' needs as they educate Oregon's students with disabilities. I am writing on behalf of OEA to show our support of HB 4079.

Specifically, the goal of this bill is something that our OEA Special Education Committee has been wishing for and recommending for quite some time as it would create more seamless transitions of support for students who move between districts in a region or across our state. This would be considerable assistance toward our members' caseload responsibilities, as Individualized Education Program (IEP) paperwork responsibilities and deadlines could have a more centralized location statewide for each student, and no longer would our members be spending innumerable hours and minutes trying to figure out if a student was receiving services at their prior school, not to mention the time required to then locate and secure documents of support from a student's past district. If a student moves and an IEP meeting is due shortly thereafter, the new educators responsible for that will have a more timely heads up to follow through on their responsibilities and best meet the needs of their students in Special Education.

This type of information system could also make Child find for each Local Education Agency much more robust as students who move around the state will not fall in the cracks or lose precious specially designed instruction minutes every time a district has to "rediscover" that they are eligible for Special Education services.

As the task force considers the construction of such an information system, the OEA Special Education Committee and OEA at large believe these questions and contextual factors should be taken into consideration:

- Make sure confidentiality requirements are upheld and especially considered during this process.
- The system should be as user friendly as possible and should not create a barrier of access
- Would this information system be a new statewide database where it would be indicated that a IEP exists, or would it actually be a repository for all current/past IEPs?



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- Would this system take the place of district level IEP management software (for example, IEPPlus which is used by Willamette ESD) and allow people to efficiently manage the entire special education process—from referral, evaluation, and individual education program development, to maintaining historical information and ensuring compliance with IDEA regulations? If so...
 - How do we ensure an appropriate level of access to information vs. to make changes in a student's information?
 - How could the system regulate for multiple simultaneous users?
 - What is the coordinated implementation plan, included training users?
- Could/should this information system also provide information for students who...
 - Are/were on 504 plans?
 - Are/were on Individualized Family Service Plans?
 - Have medical flags (allergies, medical plans, etc.)?
 - Have family legal paperwork flags (e.g., no contact orders, etc.)?

Additionally, OEA would request that members who are currently licensed practitioners be engaged in this process from start to finish, as they hold the lived experiences vital to creating a successful system.

Every student deserves to receive the resources they need to succeed. In my career alone, there has been a [significant increase in students identified for special education services](#), and yet the statewide system created to support students with disabilities has remained underfunded and less innovative than the moment calls for. This type of statewide system would help our members do their best by Oregon's students who need it the most. Please vote yes on HB 4078, and ensure it receives the funding it needs so our special education programs can best provide the specially designed instruction needed for all students to receive a free, appropriate public education outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Sincerely,



Erin Whitlock
Center for Public Affairs and Professional Excellence
Oregon Education Association



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