

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Wright and Hudson and members of the committee—

My name is Ronda Johnson, and I am writing today as a teacher and a summer school coordinator, serving in the Woodburn School District. I am writing to express my support for House Bill 4082.

In conjunction with administrators, I have worked to develop an intervention and enrichment summer program in Woodburn, Oregon, that provides our students the needed time to close the gap in academics, especially in math and literacy. We also offer our students enriching activities that many of them don't get the chance to participate in during the regular school year.

Summer programs can help provide students food security and a place to feel safe where they can continue building strong relationships with adults and their peers. Summer programs provide students a chance to continue moving forward, rather than sliding backward, something we see frequently economically disadvantaged districts.

Our ideal program has become one where we include strong academics in math and literacy, incorporate SEL throughout the day with counselors working with the neediest students and provide enrichment like STEM, Art, and cooking. Parent nights are an important part of this program where parents can learn how to support their students and learn alongside them. Community members also contribute by being Buddy Readers or program volunteers. We also try to include field trips that provide our students experiences outside Woodburn and we give students books throughout the program to further their ability to read throughout the summer. Students are willing to put the time into literacy and math because they have all of these engaging enrichment activities that get them excited about the program.

This ideal program would be offered to every student that needed it. Unfortunately, every year, we find ourselves cutting out the best parts of our program and limiting the number of students that are able to participate. Some years, we cut out field trips or make the day shorter, or put over 30 students in a class to make ends meet.

Post-pandemic, Woodburn students are falling farther behind. There is not enough time in the normal school day to provide extra support for all of these students. And as each summer passes, students continue to fall farther behind.

We need consistent funding to counteract the summer backslide and to offer our students the ideal program. Not a program that has been chopped up to fit whatever leftover money we've been given with little time to prepare.

Please consider putting Oregon children first and providing them with not only the needed summer academic support, but also the social and emotional support along with counseling services that our students require.

Thank you for your time

Sincerely,

Ronda Johnson