

A City Club Report on Measure 98: High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness Act

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Measure 98 (formerly IP 65), the High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness Act, would require the Oregon Legislature to allocate about \$800 per Oregon high school student to a new “High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness Fund.” School districts would apply for funding from it for specific types of programs with the goal of improving overall student success. Future allocations to the HS Fund would be adjusted for inflation and student population.

Your committee is unanimous in its assessment that the current state of education in Oregon threatens the state’s future and economy. However, the committee split equally (five in favor and five against) as to whether Measure 98 is a good way to implement improvements. Such a split has never happened on a Club research report, at least not in recent history. Without the usual majority and minority, we present arguments and analysis from each side so that members can make an informed decision about whether City Club should support or oppose Measure 98. The order in which we discuss the sides is in no way intended to emphasize one over the other. Because a vote against the measure maintains the status quo, we discuss the “no” side first.

Summary for “No” vote

While improving student success is imperative, half of your committee concludes that Measure 98 would not create such success. Our analysis evaluated what Measure 98 actually would do, not just what it promises – or appears to promise – in best case scenarios. As presented to voters, it leaves too many unanswered questions and is too narrowly focused. Not only would its goals be unattained, it could actually cause some backward movement on education in the state.

Recommendation: Half of your committee recommends a “No” vote.

Summary for “Yes” vote

Oregon’s schools struggle to graduate and prepare young people for college and living-wage careers. Based on the current needs of Oregon as well as our political and economic context, half of your

committee endorses Measure 98 as a studied, strategic and game-changing public policy option that will generate real, positive and measurable change in high school success.

Recommendation: Half of your committee recommends a “Yes” vote.

City Club members will debate this report on Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2016 at the Club’s Ballot-Palooza event. Club members will vote on the report beginning Thursday, Aug. 25 and finishing Monday, Aug. 29. Until the membership votes, City Club of Portland does not have an official position on this report and Measure 98. The outcome of the vote will be reported on Aug. 30 in the City Club of Portland Bulletin Vol. 99, No. 2 and online at pdxcityclub.org.

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INTRODUCTION

Measure 98 will appear on the Nov. 8, 2016 ballot as follows:

**Requires state funding for dropout-prevention, career/college readiness programs;
reduces funds for other services**

RESULT OF “YES” VOTE: “Yes” vote requires state to fund dropout-prevention, career/college readiness programs through school submitted plans; state monitors programs. Required funds unavailable for other programs/services.

RESULT OF “NO” VOTE: “No” vote retains current law: legislature not required to commit funds to career-technical/college-level education/dropout-prevention programs, retains discretion to allocate funds.

SUMMARY: Currently, legislature provides General Fund revenues to State School Fund based on constitutionally required quality goals; funds distributed directly to school districts under specified formula. Measure requires legislature to separately provide at least \$800 per high school student – adjusted upward annually for inflation/population – to Department of Education (ODE) administered account; reduces General Fund revenues otherwise available for education, public services. ODE distributes those funds to school districts to establish/expand high school programs providing career-technical education, college-level courses, and dropout-prevention strategies. School districts must apply for grants, meet specified requirements. Districts may use limited portion of fund for administration costs but not unrelated activities. ODE monitors school district performance, ensures compliance, facilitates programs; Secretary of State audits biannually. Other provisions.

BACKGROUND

Spearheaded by Stand for Children Oregon, Measure 98 aims to improve Oregon’s high school graduation rate and students’ college or career preparation. Chief petitioners were Carmen Rubio, the Latino Network’s executive director; Toya Fick, Stand for Children Oregon’s executive director; and former Gov. Ted Kulongoski. The measure proposes allocating new money from the General Fund to high schools for college and career readiness programs as well as dropout prevention strategies.

The state of education in Oregon

In 2013, Oregon’s high school graduation rate was the lowest in the country at 69 percent.¹ A year later it had improved to 72 percent, in large part because of a redefinition of what counted as completion.² Nevertheless, the rate remains unacceptably low. For the class of 2015, the completion rate climbed only slightly to 74 percent.³ In a recent state-by-state ranking done by the U.S. Department of Education, Oregon still ranked near the bottom at 47th, ahead of only Alaska, Nevada, New Mexico and the District of Columbia.⁴ Witnesses presented studies specific to Oregon that found that among those

who do graduate, close to three-quarters (73 percent) need remedial education when entering community college),⁵ and fewer than 44 percent who start college go on to earn a postsecondary certificate or degree.⁶

The problem is most acute among communities of color. The class of 2015 statewide had a graduation/completion (GED or similar) rate of 77 percent, but the rate was worse among many historically underserved populations:

- The four-year graduation/completion rate was 59 percent for American Indian students, 64 percent for Black students and 69 percent for Hispanic students;
- Students considered economically disadvantaged graduated/completed at a rate of 70 percent;
- English language learners graduated/completed at a rate of 52 percent;
- Special education students graduated/completed at a rate of 56 percent.⁷

Oregon has dug itself into this hole for decades with declining funding for K-12 education since the passage of the property tax limiting Measure 5 in 1990 and Measure 50 in 1997. In fiscal year 2013-14 (the most recent year for which national data is available), Oregon spent \$9,945 per pupil, considerably less than the national average of \$11,009.⁸

State Rep. Lew Frederick, a Democrat from North Portland with a background in teaching and school administration, drew a direct line between funding cuts and students struggling to graduate.⁹

Salam Noor, the state deputy superintendent of public instruction, told Oregon Public Broadcasting, “Resources matter and for decades we have under-invested in our schools and this impacts student opportunities and outcomes as schools are forced to cut programs, teachers, and services.”¹⁰

Measure 98’s proponents aim to change this trajectory by mandating additional, targeted funding.

Former Gov. Ted Kulongoski, one of Measure 98’s lead petitioners, called Oregon’s education statistics, including graduation rates, “more than embarrassing” and said “it’s a moral imperative” that we make improvements. “You have to stop being aspirational, and you have to do something,” he said. While he acknowledged that Measure 98 is not perfect, he said it has a better chance to improve high school success than other attempts, such as the one he made as governor in 2007. The money he wanted to set aside for education ended up being absorbed into the overall K-12 funding.¹¹

Summary of Measure 98

Measure 98, the High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness Act, would create a High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness Fund (here after known as the HS Fund), active July 1, 2017. This fund would be part of the state’s General Fund, appropriated by the Legislature and overseen by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).

School districts across the state that choose to seek money from this fund would have to be deemed eligible by the State Board of Education and, if accepted into the funding program, audited by the secretary of state.

The measure directs the Legislature to set aside funds of at least \$800 per student per school year. In the act's first biennium, there is some flexibility to this amount. General Fund revenues in 2017-19 must exceed 2015-17 revenues by at least \$1.5 billion in order for \$800 per student to be required. If revenues fall short of that, less money must be contributed in the first biennium. Funding would then return to anticipated levels for the 2019-21 biennium. Annual increases would account for inflation and student growth starting on July 1, 2018.

In practice at the local level, total funding per student will vary. Like regular school funding, this fund follows Oregon's complicated funding formula for calculating state funding to school districts, which uses a weighted average of students per district. Students from low-income families, English language learners, and others considered to have high needs or to be at risk are weighted more heavily than children without those factors. The measure will also follow state laws that provide extra funding for small and remote schools.

This funding is intended to be in addition to regular annual K-12 funding, and districts may not use it to replace funding for programs already in place. Districts would be required to use the funds for career-technical education (CTE), college-level educational opportunities and dropout-prevention strategies.

Department of Education administrative costs would be paid for by the HS Fund (up to 1.5 percent of the HS Fund through 2017, and up to 1.25 percent after 2017). School districts could use up to 5 percent of funding for program-related administrative costs (including analysis of attendance) for the measure's first two years and up to 4 percent for every two years following.

If a district would like to participate by drawing money from the HS Fund but does not demonstrate success with its programs, funds could be directed away from direct service (district programs for students) and toward corrective action plans in hopes of guiding districts toward successful service models.

Districts must meet eligibility requirements to receive funding. Eligibility rules are more inclusive during the measure's first year, allowing more districts access to a new opportunity and time to make use of the money. Eligibility requirements would become stricter in the measure's second year. Participating districts must begin to follow implementation best practices. The secretary of state would conduct financial and program audits of the districts' use of these funds every two years, starting Dec. 31, 2020, nearly three and a half years after the first funds are released to districts.

The three pillars of Measure 98

High school districts are required to use the funds for CTE, college-level educational opportunities and dropout-prevention strategies.

Pillar I: Career-Technical Education (CTE)

CTE is vocational education brought into the 21st century to include not only the traditional courses of auto and shop but also robotics, medicine and computer coding, among others. It's also no longer one-off classes but strategic class sequences. Research suggests that CTE can benefit students and motivate them to become more involved in their learning.¹²

Yet CTE has been a casualty of funding cuts in many Oregon school districts. In the 1999-2000 school year, there were 1,202 programs in Oregon. Only 690 exist today. A wide range of CTE programs have suffered cuts. There are currently 70 business management and administration CTE programs, down from 174 such programs in 1995-96. Since 2007-08, there are 85 fewer industrial engineering programs. Construction programs have decreased by 16, from 61 to 45 across the state, over the past year.¹³

For a long time, CTE-type education was part of America's notorious tracking system that steered kids down different paths, often unofficially determined based on race and socioeconomic status. To take a CTE class in the 20th century was to be considered not smart enough for other classes and not worthy of a solid and well-paying career in a respected field.

CTE programs also have faced an image problem due to the perception that manufacturing is dwindling throughout the United States. On the contrary, Oregon employers face employee shortages for numerous blue-collar job sectors due to the trends driving students away from CTE-like courses.¹⁴ Additionally, CTE no longer is just about manufacturing; it's about a variety of careers.

Pillar II: College-level educational opportunities

College-level educational opportunities include programs such as advanced placement (AP) courses, the early college model, dual credit and dual enrollment.

Only 9.6 percent of Oregon high school students took at least one AP course in 2014,¹⁵ yet research shows that the more advanced coursework students take while still in high school the more likely they will do well in college and graduate college in four years.¹⁶ Higher-level work includes AP courses as well as concurrent enrollment that involve high school students enrolling in college-level courses.

The early college model, which includes dual credit and dual enrollment, allow students to earn high school and college credit at the same time. Each is set up in its own way (e.g., classes held at the high school during the day or taught via distance education by college instructors) and each focuses on a certain group of students (e.g., those considered high achievers or those typically underrepresented in college).

In 2013, a study of early college students, the majority of whom were members of communities of color or from low-income families, found that students who participated in an early college program graduated from high school, enrolled in college and graduated college at higher rates than those who did not attend early college.¹⁷

Pillar III: Dropout-prevention strategies

School districts that receive funding must address dropout problems in the following ways:

- Implementing activities designed to reduce chronic absenteeism,
- Identifying students at risk of not graduating with regular review of attendance, earned grades and credits, and disciplinary reports,
- Providing academic and social support to at-risk students by the time they enter 10th grade and
- Providing counseling and coaching that include career guidance and postsecondary education options.

SOME NOTES ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

High school success and education in general is a complex challenge. Working within the time constraints of City Club's ballot measure research process, your committee could not address all possible positive and negative assertions. We also note that due to time constraints, both ours and our witnesses, we didn't necessarily interview experts in the order most conducive to drawing a complete picture of Measure 98 efficiently.

We encountered two unexpected challenges in obtaining frank testimony that reflected multiple viewpoints, which also affected our ability to learn from a wide range of perspectives on Measure 98.

Despite considerable outreach, your committee was unable to identify any organized, public opposition to Measure 98. This does not mean that there are no groups against it, only that none has gone on record. Some groups declined interviews with us, wishing to remain publicly neutral.

Some of the invited proponents of the measure were accompanied by campaign staff or others directly involved with the campaign. We are confident all witnesses are professionals who wouldn't change their positions because of the presence of a campaign member, but we have to wonder how their testimonies would be nuanced differently without a campaign advocate at the table who sometimes intervened in the discussion.

Your committee's members split equally with five opposed to Measure 98 and five in favor. Each side prepared a discussion and analysis section. All committee members hope this will help City Club members and the public to better understand the measure and its context.

It falls to the full membership to determine if City Club will take a position on Measure 98 and what it will be.

Major assertions against Measure 98

- Budgeting by ballot measure can have unforeseen problems and bypasses the Legislature, something that past City Club reports recommend against.
- Dedicated funding becomes unavailable for other critical and underfunded state services and programs, like K-12 education, social services, public safety and higher education.
- Mandated programs force districts to use these funds for specific programs that may not address individual school and district needs.
- It's unclear whether the remaining limited resources would be enough to rebuild CTE, college prep and dropout prevention programs where they don't already exist.
- It does not adequately address systemic issues of equity and access them in new ways.
- A top down, state-centered measure creates more complicated and costly bureaucracy to provide accountability and oversight
- Criteria used to measure the impact of mandated HS Fund spending is unclear.
- It assumes a sufficient level of experience and expertise among districts, adequate infrastructure and enough qualified personnel to implement these programs and sufficient community capacity to support these efforts.
- It is unclear how the measure's "best practices" for building high school success programs would be adapted to local needs, implemented, tracked and evaluated.
- It lacks an analysis of the current capacity of districts to implement the mandated practices or the costs of doing so in districts of different sizes across the state.

Major assertions in favor of Measure 98

- Because this is a statutory measure, the Legislature can fine-tune or fix it if necessary.
- It is a targeted, evidence-based approach with a specific amount of dedicated funding to be spent in three categories.
- It encourages program accountability via ODE review of how funds are spent.
- Funding comes from state revenue growth, not from a new tax.
- Funding is available to all districts, individually or collaboratively, with amounts based on student population and equity needs, using a request process that districts already use when applying for other state funding.
- It provides extra money for low-income, rural and other underserved students per current Oregon school funding formula.
- Districts can opt out by not applying for funds.
- It fills that need for program sustainability that current short-term grants like CTE Revitalization Grants do not.
- Petitioners interviewed representatives from a variety of school districts around the state. All reportedly expressed interest in funding for the three pillars – CTE, early college credit programs and support for students at risk of dropping out.
- Similar programs elsewhere and research have shown a strong correlation to improved graduation rates.
- It provides opportunity for citizens to change the decades-long decline of Oregon high school graduation rates.

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS IN OPPOSITION TO MEASURE 98

As noted above, your committee was unable to find organized public opposition or anyone willing to go on the record against the measure. Some organizations we contacted, said the measure suggests such a new approach that any assessment of implementation implications would be purely speculative.

Abstainers perhaps worry about the public perception of lobbying against children. It seems nearly impossible to speak against this measure when our schools are in such trouble. Plus, in Measure 98, we do have a proposed measure that appears to have at least some support from experts.

While we emphatically agree that the current status of high school success in Oregon is unacceptable, the “we’ve got to do something” argument is not a good enough reason to support Measure 98.

Portland State University Associate Professor Yves Labissiere has experience creating and leading the kinds of programs that this measure would fund, specifically, dual credit programs that fall under the measure’s college-prep pillar. We asked him about possible downsides, including whether it allocates sufficient funding for what it seeks to accomplish, whether it has equity shortcoming and whether its implementation plan is sufficiently clear to encourage success. He said that each point is a concern and that there is a possibility that there will be no appreciable positive change if Measure 98 passes.¹⁸

Such an outcome could infuriate voters and could sour them on future measures to achieve genuine reform and change that would improve the education system.

Some witnesses interviewed by your committee argued that the measure’s wording was too vague or open-ended.

Labissiere stated that Measure 98, although flawed, offers hope that the Oregon Department of Education, districts, schools and teachers will create successful new programs accessible by all students when there is funding to support them. He said that to support Measure 98 is a “leap of faith,” one that he personally is willing to take.

The half of your committee that opposes Measure 98 does not feel that hope is an acceptable strategy when making public policy. While the measure’s promises and ideals are good and even necessary, our concerns about the actual implementation mean that we must encourage a “No” vote.

Equity

Oregon has diverse school districts – big and small, deeply urban and distinctly remote, wealthy and struggling for funds. Within these districts students are even more diverse, varying by race, gender, social and economic classes, language, ability and other factors. We cannot rely on funding parameters and noble intentions to address equity concerns. Measure 98’s open framework cannot be expected to encourage individuals, districts and schools to think differently about students who have historically been ignored, such as those in communities of color and other minority populations. For example, some districts in rural Oregon are so small that even with Oregon’s weighted funding system, they may not be

eligible for much money. Though schools can collaborate, the measure does not require them to, and some of Oregon's districts are so geographically far apart that they in effect could not partner.

Your committee, both those voting no on Measure 98 and those voting yes, raised questions of equity from the beginning of our research, and we asked witnesses about it. On its surface, Measure 98 is an education measure, not an equity measure. Issues of equity, however, are key to understanding Oregon's education plight. Our state as a whole is underperforming, but the numbers are distinctly worse for some groups. Measure 98 also raises questions of equity because of the solutions it proposes. For example, CTE has historically been a male-dominated field. Will girls have equal access and feel welcome in one of Measure 98's three pillars?

"The number of equity questions on this are really significant," Labissiere said. "The danger in these initiatives is that we just use them to replicate what we have been doing and therefore also use them to make even worse the inequities. So, unless we're mindful, it's almost inevitable." Labissiere said that students may find themselves in programs that appear progressive, but in reality exist "because we've failed them everywhere else."¹⁹

Age of intervention

Committee members opposed to Measure 98 are concerned that its proposed funding would be too little too late. Investment in younger students would be a more effective use of resources in order to put them on the path to later success. While not taking a position on the measure, Burk stated that high school success isn't a high school problem; it's a K-12 problem.²⁰

When asked if high school is too late to try to change a student's course in life, Labissiere, who works with students that age and older, said money spent on high schools would be money well spent because it could help to change infrastructure.²¹

Yet infrastructure change is not the goal of Measure 98. Districts are being evaluated on graduation rates in the present, not on institutional changes in the future, so they will pursue programs that produce immediate results, even if they are not the most effective over the long-term.

Cost

State Sen. Richard Devlin, who co-chairs the Legislature's Ways and Means committee, told your committee that as an advocate, he might have written a similar measure. As a legislator focused on the state's budget, however, he's concerned about the fact that the measure calls for programs to be expanded but doesn't provide additional funding. Thus, it is essentially an unfunded mandate.²²

Devlin said that Measure 98 will cost \$338 million to implement in the next biennium and that current projections are for a \$1.4 billion budget shortfall next biennium. Passage of this measure would increase the budget hole and result in less money being available for other core services, including education.²³

CTE programs seem to be leading the conversation. Witnesses talked most about that pillar to the near exclusion of the other two. That allows CTE to become the focus of this fund. It's also potentially the

most expensive of the measure's three pillars. It's entirely possible that most of a district's money could go to CTE. We are concerned that that might mean the HS Fund would not in practice be directed toward the measure's stated goal of improved graduation rates across the state. Burk stated that given the costs associated with CTE (especially since space that was formerly dedicated to CTE has been converted by districts to other uses), the \$800/student allocation was probably inadequate.

According to Burk, the reasons students drop out have "very little to do with academic success," which is what the CTE pillar addresses. Instead, students drop out for three main reasons:

- Financial – they have to work to support their parents and siblings or their own children, or they have to provide child care while the adults work
- Health – including drug and alcohol dependency
- Significant family issues – their families kicked them out or they removed themselves from an unsafe environment

The solution, Burk said, is "much broader than just getting kids to attend school," as with CTE courses.²⁴

Your committee's members opposed to Measure 98 are concerned not only that \$800 per student is not enough but that it will naturally go toward the flashy and more resource-dependent CTE pillar and not to a place where it could actually meet the measure's goal of improved graduation rates.

It is also important to note that CTE programs already receive support through state CTE Revitalization Grants. Likewise, the state already reimburses high school districts for students taking the ACT exam, and there are scholarships available for students interested in taking AP tests. This is not to say that the existing funding is adequate, but there is some funding in place.

Human capital and school readiness

Even if Measure 98 can provide enough money for school districts across the state to implement solid programming, successful educational innovation requires much more than just a cash infusion.

After our interview with John Niebergall, who has been a leader in hands-on technical education in Oregon for more than 30 years, your committee wondered if a lot of his success hinged on something no ballot measure can fulfill. A big part of Niebergall's work is helping schools around Oregon and the country create programs such as his, and under his guidance a lot of new programs have found footing. But their successes, and challenges, have not all revolved around money. Key components to success seemed to be his passion, his individualized efforts and his being at the right place at the right time with the right amount of support, your committee's opposition side believes. In fact, Niebergall alone received a \$500,000 CTE Revitalization grant in order to teach teachers what he does so well.

The measure does allow funds to support the "recruitment, licensing, employment and training of personnel," but it strongly encourages partnerships with local businesses and trade unions to fill in any gaps. For example, the Associated General Contractors is leading a weeklong summer program for high school teachers. But because teachers of CTE must be certified, and teachers of all programs aimed at

improving high school success and college and career readiness need to be multifaceted and multitasking “champions,” the half of your committee voting no is not convinced that reliance on workplace tours and guest talks by retirees (two other examples the measure offers when asked about teacher training) is enough. The opposition side of your committee believes there is a disconnect between the aspirations of the measure’s backers and the reality of professional education at the high school level.

In answer to the question of districts or schools needing someone like him to train teachers, to bring in ideas or even equipment, and to spearhead such a new direction as Measure 98 proposes, Niebergall said, “It’s a good problem to have.” But we don’t know if it’s a “good problem” that’s solvable. Niebergall discussed a lack of national leadership among CTE instructors championing this approach, as well as a lack of a bigger picture for funding, advocacy, et cetera. He reflected that there really isn’t any organization among CTE instructors nor is there a systematic, coordinated approach to preparing future CTE educators.²⁵ There is also doubt within this side of the committee that all districts have the capability and know how to implement these programs on their own, given that there is minimal direction in the ballot initiative and via recommendations from the state.

The half of your committee opposed to Measure 98 remains concerned that a lot rests on likely expensive and possibly unpredictable human commitment.

Finally, the ballot sponsors frequently refer to “best practices” as the heart of successful program implementation. However, it was unclear to the “no” members of the committee how these practices would be identified, vetted, selected and propagated among districts across the state. While the campaign provided aggregate projections on how tax revenues assigned by Measure 98 might be spent to cover all Oregon districts, there are no estimates on likely costs to cover specific program components by individual district. As a result, it remains unclear to this half of your committee how districts unfamiliar with the latest program innovations and research in CTE, college preparation and dropout prevention would gain this knowledge in a systematic way that could positively and effectively influence their own individual district program design and implementation.

City Club’s stance on budgeting by ballot measure

Though your committee is not strictly bound by past City Club of Portland reports, we must note the Club’s stance on putting budget questions before voters. The Club has studied the initiative process twice in the past 20 years.²⁶ Both times the research committee cautioned against using ballot measures to mandate state expenditures. Such measures, they concluded, confound the Legislature’s constitutional role.

“Mandating changes in revenue and expenditures through the initiative system disrupts the state’s budgeting process, confounds the Legislature’s constitutional requirement to balance the state’s budget and negatively affects state and local bond ratings. Furthermore, a degree of inherent unreliability and lack of context for financial impact statements limits voters’ ability to make informed choices about ballot measures with significant fiscal impacts,” a 2008 report concluded.²⁷

A 1996 report specifically recommended that Oregon enact a constitutional amendment banning ballot measures that would require appropriations of more than \$500,000 per year, which Measure 98 does, if they do not also create a new source of revenue to cover the cost. Such an amendment has never been adopted.

These precedents raise additional concerns for the half of your committee that opposes Measure 98. Those committees conducted comprehensive research. Every ballot measure should be considered on its own merits, but City Club should not put aside past research without careful reflection and good cause.

Conclusions in opposition to Measure 98

Oregon's education emergency is undeniable. It is tempting to vote for the measure because of the ineffectiveness of the status quo. Indeed, a vote of opposition to Measure 98 could feel like one against necessary change.

Yet even those in favor of the measure expressed hesitation about its vague framework, unclear implementation and grand promises. In our state's precarious position, we can't afford just any solution. We must have a clear plan to succeed as quickly as possible in the goals of retaining students and better preparing them for study and work after high school. Measure 98 does not provide that.

Recommendation

Half of your committee recommends a "No" vote on Measure 98.

Signatures

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Bedell

Meg Merrick

Mari Meyer

Judith Ramaley

Mike Rogers

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS IN SUPPORT OF MEASURE 98

Both halves of your committee recognize how monumentally Oregon's education system is failing students – some students more than others. With 10,000 Oregon students per year grades 9-12 failing to graduate with their classmates on time, most of them dropouts, we also are moved by the urgency with which a solution must be found. Measure 98 does not meet every need at the high school level, but it is pointed in the direction the state needs to go.

Measure 98 offers a rigorously studied and focused set of three pillars that have been shown to correlate strongly with increasing rates of high school graduation across the state and nation.²⁸ It provides a focus on proven program categories and, within those categories, opportunities for individual school district input, design and mix of programs to best benefit their student populations.

The half of your committee opposed to Measure 98 argues that it is too vague, but we who support the measure view that as a positive because it would give flexibility to school districts. Measure 98, as it's written, does leave substantive work up to the Legislature and Oregon Department of Education (ODE). That is what successful measures do, in this half of your committee's opinion, and we feel the measure should not be so overly prescriptive as to prevent districts from doing what suits their students best.

Measure 98 addresses significant needs, including persistent racial and economic inequities, through a solution that has been co-created by the communities most directly affected.

Measure 98 provides a sustained, targeted investment that will drive a systemic paradigm shift in education and our economy. It offers enhanced transparency and a focus on outcomes. It is in tune with current needs and opportunities, and it is an important step in supporting innovation, collaboration and the long-term future of Oregon. It does not call for business as usual, which is good because Oregon's usual is failing too many students.

Implementation

This measure would fit within ODE's existing structure and would push the department's responsibilities in an exciting and manageable way. Rob Saxton, former deputy superintendent for public instruction, noted that the department already works with districts on grant applications and allocations. He estimated that Measure 98's administrative budget would be enough to cover that administrative costs to ODE.²⁹

Former Gov. Ted Kulongoski said Measure 98 would offer a good challenge for the culture of ODE, creating a different synergy between it and districts.³⁰ The campaign supporting this measure asserts that there is already expertise in ODE and the Chief Education Office to establish new programs and to assess and grow existing ones – expertise that the measure's implementation would tap.³¹

The half of your committee that is in favor of Measure 98 finds that ODE is capable of managing Measure 98 successfully and that compelling ODE to implement a set of CTE, college-readiness and dropout-prevention programs by way of voter initiative is a reasonable approach in Oregon.

Equity

Julia Meier, executive director of the Coalition of Communities of Color, an Measure 98 sponsor, said that years ago coalition members prioritized education issues in their policy work. “There are deep and broad racial inequities in every education indicator that you look at,” she said. “Those inequities are related to much more widespread inequities that we see in the community at large. The economic inequities and the social inequities that we experience as a state are not entirely but in large part based on educational racial inequities that we see.”³²

Burk agreed in his testimony to your committee. “The dropout issue has very significant implications for race, limited English proficiency, and poverty.”³³

Carmen Rubio, executive director of the Latino Network, is one Measure 98’s three chief petitioners. She emphasized the importance of promoting early literacy, encouraging parent involvement, and providing academic support and activities to high school students in a culturally responsive way. She noted that this work requires nuance that is most effectively offered by people working from within the community.

Yet those community-based efforts reach fewer people than the number who need support.³⁴ Offering voter-supported, dedicated state funding, as Measure 98 does, would provide important new support to reach more students and families.

Meier emphasized the fact that two of the measure’s chief petitioners are women of color. “The idea that communities of color can be in the lead on issues that disproportionately affect communities of color is such an amazing opportunity,” she said. The Coalition of Communities of Color, which is composed of nearly 20 organizations involved in racial justice work, also supports Measure 98.³⁵

The half of your committee in favor of Measure 98 finds that its approach of targeting graduation rates is especially important for historically underserved communities of color in Oregon.

Age of intervention

Burk told your committee that Oregon has already put money into younger grades, although the state still faces education challenges. Major initiatives aimed at grades below high school include the 2013 investment in all-day kindergarten, a class-size initiative and the Network for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning.³⁶

Oregon needs to fund a comprehensive, quality system at all levels, he added. Efforts to improve investments in education should not create conflict or competition among advocates at different levels. Not having quality pre-K-8 programs only makes the challenges facing high schools worse. But failure to provide adequate high school funding limits the continuation of growth established in the pre-K-8 years. It is a system of interconnected parts, all of which contribute to student success. Targeting one part (high school) should not be viewed as failing another part (pre-K through 8).

Cost

The proposed \$800 per student is not a lot of money. It totals only one-sixth of projected new revenues expected in the next biennium.³⁷ According to the measure's backers, at full funding, the General Fund budget allocation to K-12 will increase one percentage point.³⁸ There is a possibility that it won't be enough to accomplish immediately every school's dream, but it might be exactly the right amount to meet one key funding criteria: Sustainability.

"Without stable funding," Labissiere said, "it's very difficult to take this risk." He said that he often meets administrators who want to start a new program but are hesitant even with grant money. At some point in the foreseeable future, "the grant is gone, and so is the opportunity."³⁹

Measure 98 offers not a time-limited grant but a new line item in the state budget, and it's a small enough piece of the budget to avoid being cut during economic downturns. And we are not facing a downturn: general fund revenues for the 2015-17 biennium are expected to reach \$18.02 billion, an increase of \$1.9 billion over 2013-15.⁴⁰

The half of your committee that supports Measure 98 notes that concerns about funding come up every time new spending is proposed – it is never the right time. Meanwhile, graduation rates hover at dismal levels.

Measure 98 might also leverage additional sources of funding, Labissiere suggested. It's easier to get money with money. For example, if a school receives Measure 98 funding for a coding program, a local computing business might be interested in partnering with the school.

Niebergall and Saxton agreed that community partners as well as administrators, teachers, parents and students might hesitate to invest in programs that don't have sustainable funding sources. As budgets are now, CTE programs have to chase grants and other temporary funding sources sometimes as often as every year to keep them afloat. That time and energy would be better spent on program and staff development as well as actual instruction.⁴¹

Beyond the money

One of the points Burk was concerned about was the expense of creating CTE programs, from building the facilities and buying any equipment to certifying teachers, most of whom at the high school level are not certified to teach CTE. However, one of the strengths of this measure is that it would encourage partnerships among organizations – high schools, community colleges, university and businesses.

"There's enough wiggle room in here that you might be able to make [relationships with outside organizations] work," he said⁴²

Trip Goodall, superintendent of the Canby School District, suggested that most districts have programs at the ready, should funding become available, so answering ODE's questions for program initiation will likely not be all that cumbersome.⁴³

Rubio also alluded to this in her testimony, commenting that many districts know what programs they need and how they would use this money because they see the value in these sorts of programs.⁴⁴

City Club’s stance on budgeting by ballot measure

Though your committee is not bound by past City Club of Portland reports, we must note the Club’s stance on putting questions of revenue and spending to the voters. The Club has studied the initiative process twice in the past 20 years.⁴⁵ Both research committees cautioned against using ballot measures to mandate state expenditures.

The half of your committee that supports this measure is comfortable allowing budgeting by ballot in this case. Measure 98 is not a constitutional amendment, only statutory. The Legislature can amend it if necessary. This is a serious enough problem that if the only way to enact change is via ballot because legislators themselves have not stepped forward with a suitable plan to set aside money, then it is justified for City Club to break with precedent.

Conclusions in support of the measure

Measure 98 is a promising solution to the education crisis Oregon faces. The plan is imperfect, but the benefits – including but not limited to a steady funding source, local control of money distribution and program implementation, progressive state-level guidance and evaluation, and focus on establishing or reengaging programs that look beyond the classroom – far outweigh any potential missteps.

We were asked to evaluate not only the potential of the bill in its implementation but also the consequences of inaction. Measure 98 does provide evidence-based approaches – we interviewed leaders in the type of programming the measure supports – that have proven results. This plan enlarges that work, scaling it so it can be replicated across the state in tailored ways. Measure 98 is a feasible solution to Oregon’s decades-long history of disinvestment in education at a time when we can’t afford not to step forward.

Recommendation

Half of your committee recommends a “Yes” vote on Measure 98.

Signatures

Respectfully submitted,

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WITNESSES

Patrick Burk, Assoc. Prof., Educational Leadership & Policy, Portland State University, May 10, 2016.

Sen. Richard Devlin, District 19, June 28, 2016.

Jonah Edelman, CEO, Stand for Children, July 1, 2016.

Toya Fick, Executive Director, Stand for Children Oregon; Chief Petitioner, IP 65, May 16, 2016.

Trip Goodall, Superintendent, Canby School District, June 7, 2016.

Ted Kulongoski, Former Oregon Governor (2003-11), Chief Petitioner, IP 65, June 7, 2016.

Yves Labissiere, Assoc. Prof., Ronald E McNair Scholars, Portland State University, June 21, 2016.

Julia Meier, Executive Director, Coalition of Communities of Color, June 29, 2016.

Tim Nesbitt, Former Gubernatorial Adviser, Adviser to Petitioners, IP65, May 16 & June 7, 2016.

John Niebergall, Digital Design and Fabrication Instructor, Sherwood High School, May 24, 2016.

Dave Rosenfeld, Campaign Manager, IP 65, May 16, 2016, June 7, 2016, July 1, 2016.

Carmen Rubio, Executive Director, Latino Network, June 29, 2016.

Pablo Saldana, Portland State University Graduate, June 29, 2016.

Rob Saxton, Superintendent, NW Regional Education Service District, July 1, 2016.

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ABOUT CITY CLUB

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