

These minutes contain materials which paraphrase and/or summarize statements made during this session. Only text enclosed in quotation marks

report a speaker's exact words. For complete contents of the proceedings, please refer to the tapes.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

January 21, 1991Hearing Room F 1:30 p.m.Tapes 4 - 5

MEMBERS PRESENT:Rep. Carolyn Oakley, Chair Rep. Vera Katz, Vice-Chair Rep. Bruce Hugo Rep. Delna Jones Rep. Mike Nelson Rep. Bob Pickard Rep. Walt Schroeder

STAFF PRESENT: Lee Penny, Committee Administrator Carolynn Gillson, Committee Assistant

MEASURES CONSIDERED: HB 2109 - Requires student accounting system to assess issue of dropouts, PPW HB 2119 - Modifies exemption for school attendance on Saturdays, PPW. HB 2120 - Prohibits school districts from charging security deposit standard, prescribed textbooks, PUB

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TAPE 4, SIDE A

005 REP. CAROLYN OAKLEY, CHAIR: Calls the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. > Asks for unanimous consent to suspend the committee rules and allow Rep. Pickard to change his vote on HB 2097 that was reported out of committee on 1/16/91.

VOTE: Rep. Pickard voted aye.

024 REP. DELNA JONES: Explains HB 2097 really should have gone to the Committee on Revenue and School Finance.

CHAIR OAKLEY: Asks for unanimous consent to suspend the committee rules and reconsider the previous action on HB 2097.

MOTION: Rep. Jones moves that HB 2097 be referred to the committee on Revenue and School Finance.

REP. BRUCE HUGO: It makes sense that all the money bills dealing with education go to the Revenue and School Finance Committee for a distribution formula. The distribution formula incorporates more than basic school support. > Had the bill gone to Ways and Means it would have been funded or not funded on its own. Its a choice of how to do business.

VOTE: In a roll call vote, the motion carried, with Rep. Katz voting NAY.

(Tape 4, Side A) HB 2109 - PUBLIC HEARING Witnesses: Judy Miller, Department of Education Gregg McMurdo, Department of Education Doug Wilson, Legislative Fiscal Office Alan Tressider, Oregon School Boards Association (OSB A) Wilma Wells, Confederation of School Administrators (COSA)

090 CHAIR OAKLEY: Reviews background information on the bill.

125 JUDY MILLER, assistant superintendent for student services, Department of Education: For the past several years the Department has been working on implementing a system on early school leavers. > This system was reviewed by the Legislative Audit Committee to determine how well school districts were reporting the information. As a result of the report generated by the Legislative Audit Committee (see EXHIBIT H, 9/14/90 Joint Interim Education Committee minutes), we have updated the manual school districts are required to use. The current system is required by administrative rule. > Because of lack of consistency in reporting from the schools, the Legislative Audit Committee is suggesting some things in statute that are really more detailed than what we currently have in our rule. > The Department has addressed many of those inconsistencies in it's new training manual. > Outlines the process the Department will follow (EXHIBIT A).

176 REP. JONES: Can the Department do what this bill proposes without legislation, and if so, why can it not be done by rule?

MILLER: We are currently doing this through our existing administrative rule. Legislative Counsel has proposed this bill to tighten up on some of the language in our existing rule. > We are into the third year of school districts reporting to the Department. > We are working to help school districts do a better job of accounting. The Department is doing the best job it can with limited resources.

204 REP. BOB PICKARD: You are doing this anyway and you are not requesting anymore money?

MILLER: We started this process four years ago with federal money. The money went away but we continue to do this process. > The Department is trying to improve the process as recommended by the Audit Committee without additional resources. > Our budget package requesting a staff position was not included in the Governor's budget.

230 REP. MIKE NELSON: Will this bill need further funding?

233 GREGG McMURDO, Department of Education: This is not a Department bill. There is a fiscal impact attached to the bill (EXHIBIT B).

REP. WALT SCHROEDER: Do you not have enough people to do this without getting additional funding?

McMURDO: Not in the way the Legislative Audit Committee feels it should be done.

REP. SCHROEDER: What about simplifying this and providing computer software to the schools?

255 MILLER: Many of the school districts are working on automating this process. If we had one additional full-time staff person and were able to go out school districts and help them get set up, we could make the

system more efficient for them. > School districts now fill out a two-side form on each student who leaves prior to graduating and does not go into another school program. > Larger districts are providing the information to us on computer. > We conduct training sessions to keep the clerical staff doing this process up-to-date. There is a larger turnover in this staff. > Last fall, we received \$15,000 from the Children and Youth Services Commission to help us with this process. A consultant was hired to do the training. > We also need to do periodic audits. There is some inconsistency because of high staff turnover in local school districts.

301 REP. VERA KATZ: If we want to reduce the dropout rate, there needs to be consistency in who is a dropout and how dropouts are accounted for.

MILLER: The State Board has a definition for dropout. Nationally, there is a move to adopt some common definitions between states. > We are getting close to a good benchmark. This system needs some ongoing management. > This system is very clear about who is and who is not to be reported. > This system reports for the district and it is a public report.

409 CHAIR OAKLEY: Will school districts need to hire additional personnel to do this?

MILLER: Most school districts do this with existing staff. Larger districts have a lot more paperwork to process at the school building level. It is an extra burden on the district's staff.

TAPE 5, SIDE A

012 REP. HUGO: How confidential is this information?

MILLER: The information is confidential in terms of its identification with specific students. > Lists the information requested from school districts.

REP. HUGO: Is there a national accounting system?

MILLER: It is being developed. Oregon has a pilot project. The national and state systems will be parallel.

066 REP. HUGO: Would a student transferring from a public school system to a private school system be listed as a dropout?

MILLER: If a transcript is requested by the private school, then that student would not be counted as a dropout. We do not have a way of requiring private schools to report to us. A private school student would not be called a dropout in the statutes.

092 REP. HUGO: I would like to see a correlation between the money going from the state to school districts based on per capita and students to the number of students we have in that system?

MILLER: Next year this system is going to be managed by the same section that manages state school support.

097 REP. KATZ: Is there anything in HB 2109 that you are not doing now or not planning to do?

MILLER: In Section 3, line 23, school districts are to report on all their students who transfer. This would require an involved process for school districts.

REP. KATZ: The student not the administration ought to answer why they are transferring. Is this the only thing the Department is not doing currently?

MILLER: Yes. The Department is going to need additional resources to do what is in this bill and in the report from the Legislative Audit Committee.

172 DOUG WILSON, legislative analyst, Legislative Fiscal Office and staff for the Joint Legislative Audit Committee: Lists goals of accounting system: > Provide a timely accounting of students who withdraw from school before graduating. > Provide descriptive information on students who withdraw. > Identify patterns that may assist the schools and the Department in developing programs to address dropout problems. > Provide school districts with management tools for accessing which students are dropping out and why.

200 REP. JONES: Does this process allow the student to self-report?

MILLER: There is an opportunity for students to report if the school would allow them to do that. Ideally, we would like to see exit interviews done. We need to tighten up on the system to determine where students go and why.

251 WILSON: The schools that were committed to this process did attempt to learn why the student dropped out.

REP. HUGO: The dropout rate fluctuates because of the economy. The higher the economy the larger the dropout rate. > The data does not support thinking there is a dropout rate crises. > Many students dropout because of the hopelessness of earning the required credits.

286 WILSON: During our visits, we were evaluating the student accounting system, not the schools we visited. We evaluated 15 schools of varying size in most parts of the state. Because the time spent in the schools varied, the samples were not statistically valid. Of the 15 schools we looked at, only 70 percent of the dropouts were actually reported. > We identified four major reasons for the inaccuracies: consistent definitions of dropouts or early leavers were not used; school officials failed to make the necessary financial and staff resource commitment to the student accounting system; an inadequate level of training of personnel; and reporting procedures were not uniform. > Most common reporting errors were found when students did not return to school after summer break.

395 CHAIR OAKLEY: When students do not return, could it be they went to another school and a transcript was not requested?

WILSON: We make every effort to find out if the school had received a request to transfer student records. If no record is found, the student is counted as a dropout.

412 REP. SCHROEDER: Is it possible a public school in Oregon would not require a transcript from the school the student previously attended?

MILLER: They would be out of compliance with Department directives.

Most public high schools in other states will follow the same procedure.
There is more of a problem with private schools.

TAPE 4, SIDE B

016 REP. HUGO: Nationally school districts request records but do not turn students away without them.

020 REP. JONES: What is the process if a student goes to a community college?

MILLER: Explains how those students would be reported. > If the Department were able to get social security numbers on all students, we would be able to do much better job with interfacing with community college records which show us when students get their GED. We cannot require students to give us their social security numbers at this point. > If a student leaves and goes into a community college program, they would be reported as a dropout if the school district has dropped them from the roll.

043 REP. KATZ: Why are social security numbers not required?

McMURDO: The use of social security numbers are restricted under federal law.

065 WILSON: Reviews information in the Legislative Audit Committee report (see earlier reference) concerning the four major reasons he identified earlier for inaccuracies in the reporting system. > Reviews the recommendations in the report. > Definitions for retention, at-risk youth, graduation rate and dropout rate were not included in the bill.

185 REP. PICKARD: Rather than a bill to do this, would it be better to pass a statute saying basic school support will be deduced if school districts do not comply with the established rules?

WILSON: Not all school districts were not complying.

221 MILLER: The reports that were audited were only preliminary reports. This is the beginning of a complicated process. Next year we should see a much improved reporting process because the schools are more aware of what this information is going to do. They really want a better handle on what is going to be reported publicly.

REP. PICKARD: Is there a stimulus for school districts to not comply with this system? I like the idea of having a penalty for not complying.

285 REP. KATZ: "Our first message ought to be we care about what happens to youngsters. We need to find out where they are and why they are there. If we don't get this information, we are negligent."

PENNY: Could the audits be done during standardization visits?

MILLER: Those visits are a much more detailed look at individual school records than this would require. It would take additional staff people.

306 The committee takes a break at 2:55 p.m.

310 CHAIR OAKLEY: Calls meeting back to order.

315 ALAN TRESIDDER, OSB A: We signed up in opposition of this bill. All of the things in this bill are in current Department administrative rule. I agree we need a uniform accounting system. Local school districts do need some technical assistance and the Department has not had the funds to provide that. > We do support the uniform student accounting system. > The public perception is that the Legislature is mandating local school districts to do something.

REP. HUGO: By putting this into statute, the State Board of Education may not stop or expand this program without the Legislature taking a look at it. We need to find out what these kids need to stay in school, and we need to know who they are first.

408 TRESIDDER: I don't object to the Legislature setting the policy.

393 WILMA WELLS, COSA: Our only objection to this bill is that it does not do what it purports to do. There are three important issues here and they are all related to improving management. > Explains how it is difficult for school districts to do a good job of tracking kids. > School districts need some technical assistance to do the accounting correctly. > Suggests setting up an auditing system for the student accounting system so there can be immediate feedback from the mistakes made.

TAPE 5, SIDE B

035 REP. JONES: What is the department's position?

McMURDO: We need money for this system whether by rule or legislative mandate.

(Tape 5, Side B) HB 2119 - PUBLIC HEARING

054 McMURDO: Currently some school districts are interpreting the statute to prohibit Saturday school as an alternative to suspension. This statute gives the schools the option to require a suspended student to attend school on Saturday. It requires the Board of Education to adopt exemptions for students with religious convictions that might be violated by attending Saturday school.

REP. KATZ: Suggests extending the concept of the bill to students who are at risk of failing.

076 ALAN TRESSIDER, OSB A: Testifies in support of bill. > Supports putting language in the bill to allow Saturday school for other pupils.

091 MARVIN EVANS, COSA: Supports bill and thinks the idea of including more students has merit.

(Tape 5, Side B) HB 2120 - PUBLIC HEARING

105 McMURDO: The bill is an issue of equal access and equity. There ought not be a deposit on textbooks. Many schools do not charge a deposit for textbooks. > Suggests the language on lines 11 and 12 be changed to apply to all textbooks not just required textbooks. > Explains why some schools require textbook deposits.

REP. KATZ: If the student doesn't pay the deposit, is no textbook issued?

MILLER: Some school districts have a waiver process for that.

160 EVANS: There is a process for providing textbooks to students who cannot pay the deposit.

173 REP. HUGO: How many kids are affected by the current law and, if each school board is allowed to adopt its own policy on security deposits, how does that comply with Article 8, Section 3 of the Uniform and General System of Common Schools?

EVANS: Yes, they can adopt their own policy regarding a deposit.

198 CHAIR OAKLEY: What gets the kids to return the textbooks at the end of the school year?

McMURDO: There is nothing in current statute. At one time, grades or transcripts were withheld.

210 REP. JONES: Do you know how many schools do this?

McMURDO: No.

214 EVANS: Students need to be held accountable for their actions. We are not suppose to hold records or transcripts hostage because a student has mistreated school equipment and failed to make restitution. The textbook deposit system holds students accountable. Removing the deposit makes it more difficult to hold students accountable.

REP. KATZ: Expresses her concern about using the deposit system.

EVANS: I've never had difficulty with the deposit system.

251 REP. SCHROEDER: Do you have any comparisons between schools with a deposit system and those without one?

EVANS: I do not have that information.

REP. HUGO: Without all the information, I guess we are looking at a policy question. > The parent pays the fee for their kid. What responsibility does the kid have?

300 EVANS: I would hold my kid accountable if he was not responsible and did not return the books.

REP. HUGO: Why are you opposing this bill?

EVANS: I oppose any legislation that addresses a nonexistent problem.

REP. SCHROEDER: Refers to information in the legislative fiscal analysis of bill (EXHIBIT C).

378 RUTH HEWETT, State Board of Education: The Board feels it is inappropriate to levy fees on students in schools. It is difficult to hold students accountable for issues over which they have no control.

422 CHAIR OAKLEY: Adjourns meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Submitted by: Reviewed by:

Carolynn GillsonLee Penny, Assistant Administrator

EXHIBIT LOG:

A - Testimony on HB 2109 - Judy Miller - 17 pages B - Fiscal
impact on HB 2109 - Legislative Fiscal - 1 page C - Fiscal impact
on HB 2120 - Legislative Fiscal - 1 page