

Date: March 27, 2023
To: House Education Committee
From: Kevin Strong, Sweet Home School District
Subject: House Bill 2895

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

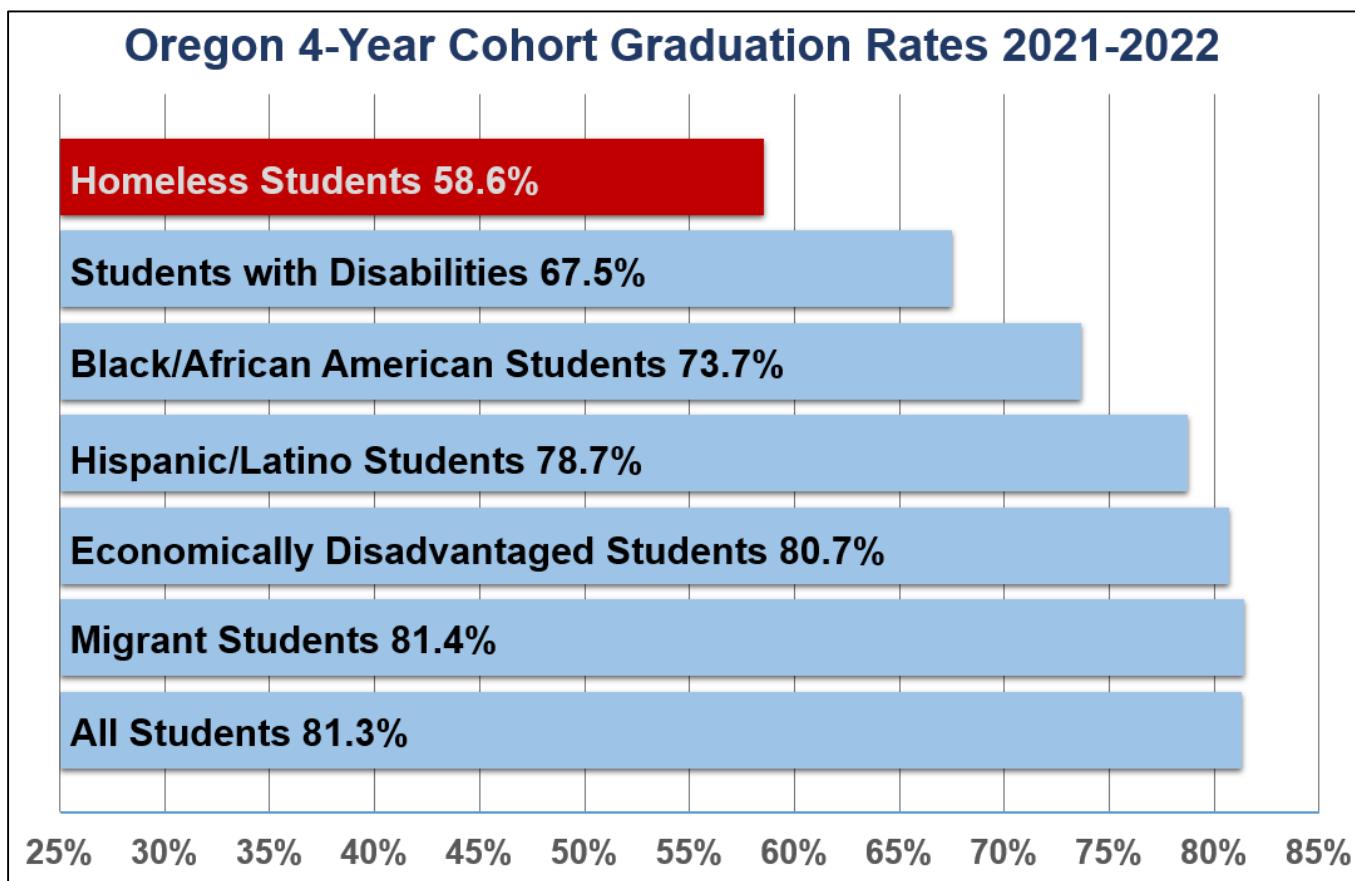
For the record, my name is Kevin Strong and I am the business manager for the Sweet Home School District. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2895.

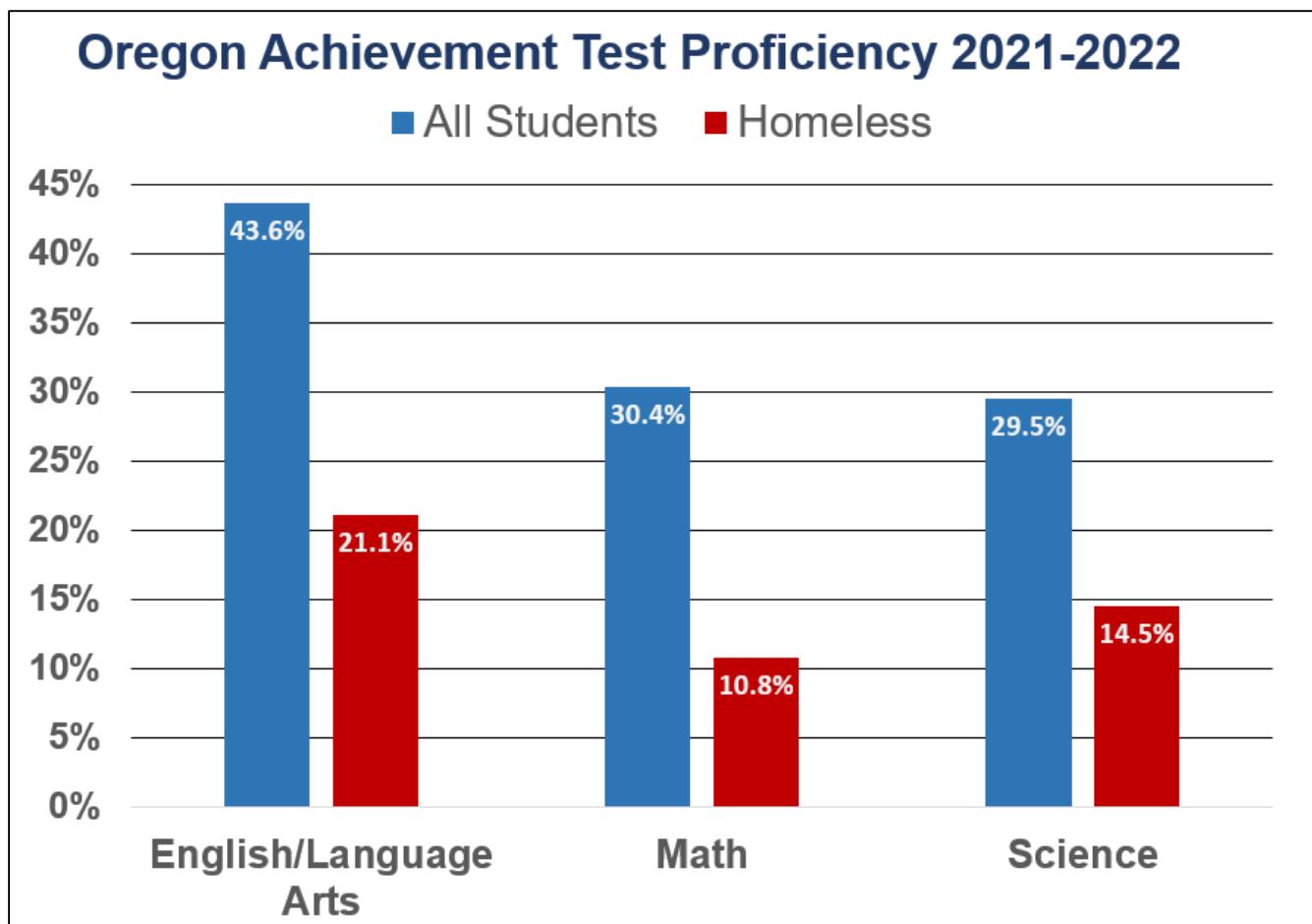
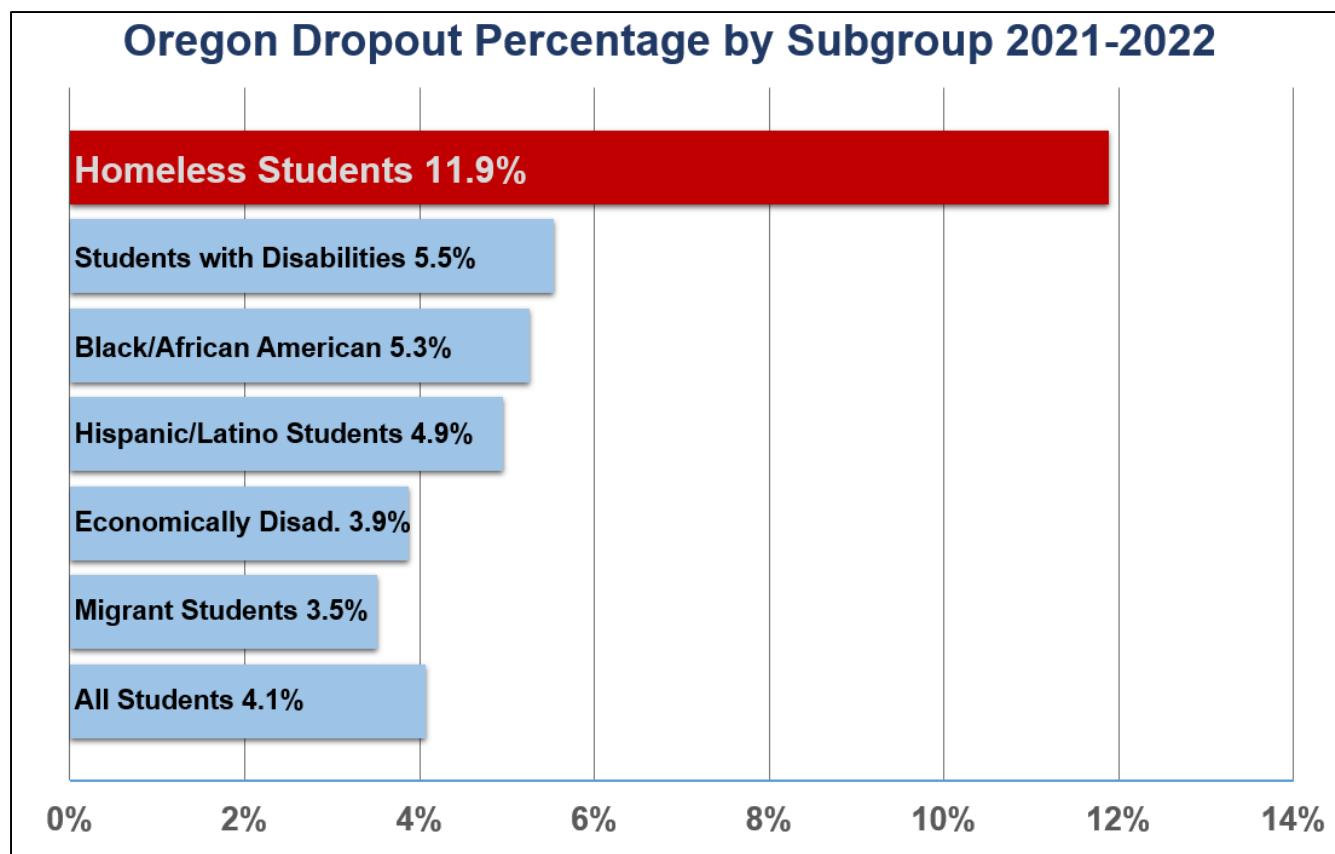
According to a 2019 University of Chicago study, students who face housing instability but stay in school and graduate are much less likely to become homeless as adults.¹

In Oregon, the State School Fund does not currently provide a funding weight for homeless students. Furthermore, many homeless students are likely undercounted in the 0.25 poverty weight calculation since poverty data is estimated for each school district using data gathered from those that complete the American Community Survey and from dependent information on tax returns.^{2,3}

House Bill 2895 will establish a homeless funding weight in the State School Fund calculation so districts serving high percentages of homeless students have more resources to support them.

The following charts generated from information provided by the Oregon Department of Education show how vulnerable Oregon's homeless students are compared to other groups of students.^{4,5}





Nationally, children experiencing homelessness are absent more frequently, are identified as having developmental delays four times as frequently and are identified as having learning disabilities twice as frequently as other students.⁶

I realize the state has limited resources and many needs. However, I believe providing additional funding to school districts serving high percentages of homeless students should be viewed as a long-term investment to help reduce homelessness in the future.

Oregon had 21,412 students identified as homeless during the 2021-2022 school year.⁷ If an extra weight was given for each homeless student, the additional cost to the State School Fund would be approximately \$200 million per year based on a funding amount of \$9,500 per weighted student.⁸

Even if additional resources are not provided to the State School Fund, adding a homelessness weight will help make the formula more equitable. Here are some examples:

The Coos Bay School District and the Central School District serving the Monmouth/Independence area are similar in size. According to the most recent 2022-2023 State School Fund estimate, Coos Bay has 3,039 students (ADMr) while Central has 3,150 students (ADMr). However, Coos Bay serves 438 homeless students while Central only has 61. Yet Coos Bay's State School Fund General Purpose Grant is \$238 per student less than Central's State School Fund General Purpose Grant.⁹

In Multnomah County, the Gresham-Barlow School District has 409 homeless students while the Riverdale School District has no identified homeless students. Yet Gresham-Barlow's State School Fund General Purpose Grant is \$566 per student less than Riverdale's General Purpose Grant.¹⁰

In Douglas County, the South Umpqua School District has 80 homeless students while the Yoncalla School District has no identified homeless students. Yet South Umpqua's State School Fund General Purpose Grant is \$5,047 per student less than Yoncalla's General Purpose Grant.¹¹

House Bill 2895 will also remove the 11 percent cap on amounts distributed from the State School Fund to school districts serving students with disabilities. Unless additional resources are provided, the net impact of this change will be to reduce funding for districts with relatively low percentages of special education students while increasing funding for school districts with relatively high percentages of special education students. From an equity standpoint, this change makes sense.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sources:

1. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, "Homelessness and Education Systems Can Work Together to Improve Youth Outcomes," 2019
2. U.S. Census Bureau, "Quantifying Relative Error in the School District Estimates"
<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saipe/guidance/district-estimates.html>
3. "Differential Undercounts in the U.S. Census: Who is Missed?" William O'Hare, 2019
4. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/students/Pages/default.aspx>
5. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/assessment/Pages/Assessment-Results.aspx>
6. "America's Homeless Children: New Outcasts: A Public Policy Report," Better Homes Fund, 1999
7. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/grants/esea/mckinney-vento/pages/default.aspx>
8. 21,412 homeless students x \$9,500/ADMw = \$203,414,000
9. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/grants/pages/school-district-and-esd-payment-statements.aspx>, 3/21/2023 Estimate for 2022-2023 school year

Coos Bay SD General Purpose Grant \$34,990,796 / 3,038.57 ADMr = \$11,516/ADMr
Central SD General Purpose Grant \$37,019,661 / 3,149.53 ADMr = \$11,754/ADMr
10. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/grants/pages/school-district-and-esd-payment-statements.aspx>, 3/21/2023 Estimate for 2022-2023 school year

Gresham-Barlow SD General Purpose Grant \$131,101,455 / 11,285.79 ADMr = \$11,616/ADMr
Riverdale SD General Purpose Grant \$6,548,705 / 537.59 ADMr = \$12,182/ADMr
11. <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/grants/pages/school-district-and-esd-payment-statements.aspx>, 3/21/2023 Estimate for 2022-2023 school year

South Umpqua SD General Purpose Grant \$16,532,258 / 1,465.92 ADMr = \$11,278/ADMr
Yoncalla SD General Purpose Grant \$4,231,711 / 259.21 ADMr = \$16,325/ADMr