

EDUCATION

Transparency issues surround graduation bill

By HILLARY BORRUD
The Oregonian

SALEM — For the next five years, an Oregon high school diploma will be no guarantee that the student who earned it can read, write or do math at a high school level.

Gov. Kate Brown had demurred earlier this summer regarding whether she supported the plan passed by the Legislature to drop the requirement that students demonstrate they have achieved those essential skills. But on July 14, the governor signed Senate Bill 744 into law.

Through a spokesperson, the governor declined again Friday, Aug. 6, to comment on the law and why she supported suspending the proficiency requirements.

Brown's decision was not public until recently, because her office did not hold a signing ceremony or issue a press release and the fact that the governor signed the bill was not entered into the legislative database until July 29, a departure from the normal practice of updating the public database the same day a bill is signed.

The Oregonian asked the governor's office when Brown's staff notified the Legislature that she had signed the bill. Charles Boyle, the governor's deputy communications director, declined to answer.

Boyle wrote in an emailed statement that suspending the reading, writing and math profi-



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File
Graduates of La Grande High School line up to receive their diplomas during the school's commencement ceremony in the gymnasium on Saturday, June 5, 2021. For the next five years, an Oregon high school diploma will be no guarantee that the student who earned it can read, write or do math at a high school level.

ciency requirements while the state develops new graduation standards will benefit "Oregon's Black, Latino, Latina, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, Pacific Islander, Tribal, and students of color."

"Leaders from those communities have advocated time and again for equitable graduation standards, along with expanded learning opportunities and supports," Boyle wrote.

Lawmakers and the governor did not pass any major expansion of learning opportunities or supports for Black, Indigenous and students of color during this year's legislative session.

The requirement that students demonstrate freshman- to sophomore-level skills in reading, writing and, particularly, math led many high schools to create workshop-style courses to help students strengthen their skills and

create evidence of mastery. Most of those courses have been discontinued since the skills requirement was paused during the pandemic before lawmakers killed it entirely.

Democrats in the Legislature overwhelmingly supported ending the long-time proficiency requirement, while Republicans criticized it as a lowering of academic standards. A couple of lawmakers crossed party lines on the votes.

Proponents said the state needed to pause Oregon's high school graduation requirements, in place since 2009 but already suspended during the pandemic, until at least the class of 2024 graduates in order for leaders to reexamine its graduation requirements. Recommendations for new standards are due to the Legislature and Oregon Board of Edu-

cation by September 2022. However, since Oregon education officials have long insisted they would not impose new graduation requirements on students who have already begun high school, new require-

ments would not take effect until the class of 2027 at the very earliest. That means at least five more classes could be expected to graduate without needing to demonstrate proficiency in math and writing.

Much of the criticism of the graduation requirements was targeted at standardized tests. Yet Oregon, unlike many other states, did not require students to pass a particular standardized test or any test at all.

ISLAND EXPRESS
LUBE CENTER & CAR WASH
Basic Maintenance • Oil Change • Wash • Under Carriage Sprayer

Automotive Accessories
- Light Bars - Floor Mats
- Winches - Bumpers
- Fender Flares - Mud Flaps
- Vortex Spray-on Liner - And More

541-963-7400
10603 ISLAND AVE
ISLAND CITY

Tires LES SCHWAB **WE'RE**
HERE TO
HELP

Hours
Mon-Fri: 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Sat: 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

2306 Adams Ave
La Grande, OR 97850
(541) 963-8411

We're just west of I-84 (exit 261)
on Adams Ave at 20th St.

lesschwab.com

\$80,000

MONEYBALL MANIA

WINNERS PLAY FOR A CHANCE TO WIN

\$10,000 CASH

DRAWINGS EVERY 30 MINUTES

FRIDAYS-SATURDAYS, 8-11pm | SUNDAYS, 3-10pm

2X

ENTRIES

On Thursdays and Sundays!

10X

ENTRIES

On Sundays when you swipe at any e-STATION, both days of the week!

BED & BREAKFAST

Bowling Getaway

- Enjoy One Night Stay
Room Upgrades Available
- Breakfast
\$20 Dining Voucher
- One Hour of Bowling
Up to six people

STARTS AT \$139 | SUN - THURS

Valid Now - September 2021

Use Special Offer Code: **BOWL**

to book online wildhorseresort.com

CASINO • HOTEL • GOLF • CINEPLEX • RV

MUSEUM • DINING • TRAVEL PLAZA • FUNPLEX

800.654.9453 • PENDLETON, OR • I-84, EXIT 216 • wildhorseresort.com • Owned and operated by CTUIR

Management reserves all rights to alter, suspend or withdraw promotions/offers at any time.

WILDHORSE

RESORT & CASINO

CAT10277-2