

SB 322 foes state their case

Proposal would halt fifth-year programs in high schools

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

SALEM — More than 100 students, school administrators and parents gathered at the state capitol Thursday to express concern over a bill that would kill fifth-year programs in high schools statewide.

Of those who testified at a public hearing on the proposed legislation — and there were many — the majority of them urged the Oregon Senate Education Committee to kill the bill instead.

Senate Bill 322 as amended Thursday would phase out what are called fifth-year programs operating in 26 school districts across the state, including ones in Dallas, Central and Falls City. The phase out would require school districts to decrease by half the number of students participating in programs starting next year.

Fifth-year — and sixth-year in Dallas' case — programs have students defer receiving a standard high school diploma in order to pursue an advanced diploma and attend classes at a community college. Because they are still a high school student, the State School Fund pays for the courses.

Among those urging the committee to give the bill a second thought was one current student of Dallas High's Extended Campus and a former student who used the opportunity to complete Chemeketa Community College's medical assistant program.

RaeAnna Shaffer, a 2012 graduate of Dallas High School, said she is the first in her family to earn a college degree, and Extended Campus made that accomplishment easier.

"It helped me cross that bridge and made it really understandable," she said.

Nick Bradford, the current Extended Campus student, told a similar story, saying Extended Campus has provided an education he otherwise didn't think was possible.

"I would like this program to keep going so that other people ... can follow the path that I have followed," he said.



Brian Green, assistant DHS principal, left, talks with Nick Bradford and RaeAnna Shaffer before testifying at public hearing on Senate Bill 322 in Salem on Thursday.



Sen. Mark Hass, center, asks a question during Thursday's public hearing on a bill that would end "fifth-year" programs in high schools. He is one of the bill's sponsors.

Brian Green, the Dallas High assistant principal who has overseen the program since it began in 2005-06, also testified Thursday.

He said the program provides a smooth transition to college and a higher retention rate than traditional avenues to college — about 80 percent.

"The impact of dismantling the fifth-year program would be devastating to Dallas High School. We would not be able to compete with our neighbors, West Salem and McMinnville, for the programs those students have because we just don't have them," Green said. "I would urge the committee to reconsider and to join us, those who have a proven program, so that we can work for a collective solution. I'm confident there is a better solution."

Green wasn't alone in asking for compromise. School officials and students from

Albany, Lebanon, Corvallis, Scio and Gervais lined up to testify against the bill.

Bill proponents say the use of funding designated for K-12 education is "not financially sustainable" and "unethical."

Sen. Mark Hass (D-Beaverton), the bill's sponsor, said districts are using a loophole in Oregon statutes

intended to pay for students to finish high school to offer the programs.

"If more districts take advantage of that loophole, the system will fail," Hass said.

Hilda Rosselli, the college and career readiness director for the Oregon Education Investment Board, said the program would cost the State School Fund at least \$19 million over a two-year period with just the 26 districts currently participating, according to Oregon Department of Education figures.

"In short, many district leaders report liking what the fifth-year program does, but feel that it is unethical to use the State School Fund in ways it was not intended to be used," Rosselli said.

School officials took exception to the use of the word "unethical" to describe the programs.

Lebanon Superintendent Rob Hess said what the 26 district are offering students is legal and above board.

"If we are doing what is right for kids, it's not unethical," he said.

Should WOU ban campus smoking?

Student group is pitching idea

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Students in the Community and Family Health Organization club at Western Oregon University are asking: Should WOU be smoke- or tobacco-free?

Right now, smoking is allowed in designated areas on campus, but, according to polls conducted by students, staff and faculty are in favor of eliminating smoking, or of getting rid of tobacco use on campus altogether, said Matthew Stevens, Polk County's tobacco prevention and education program coordinator.

Stevens said it is exciting to see students, rather than administrators, shaping future smoking policies on campus.

"In the end, it's the students' call," he said. "They're canvassing, asking for signatures from students, staff and faculty. They're taking those results to campus governmental bodies and doing presentations on why they believe it would be important to have a tobacco-free campus."

Oregon State University in nearby Corvallis became a nonsmoking campus in 2012. The University of Oregon is also a smoke-free campus.

Stevens said many students who live on campus, as well as professors who work there, do smoke, but



all employees have tobacco prevention services in their health plans.

"We're trying to be friendly," he said. People who want to quit — and studies show 75 percent of people who smoke do want to quit, Stevens said — will get "quit care packages," Stevens said.

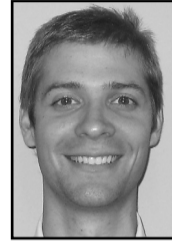
If the campus does go smoke- or tobacco-free, the next step would be going to the Monmouth City Council to try and work out smoking in nearby neighborhoods.

"We don't want smokers lining up to smoke in front of residences," Stevens said. "We want to be respectful of our neighbors."

At first, any policy would be informative and encouraging, not punishing, he added.

"There would be time to adjust to this," Stevens said. But with three-quarters of smokers saying they want to quit, he said adding more places to the list of "no smoking allowed" encourages those smokers to make the commitment to stop.

"The more places there's no tobacco allowed, the more it helps them," he said. "Smoking is nearly as addictive as heroin. We're trying to find people the right opportunity to quit, where they won't find temptation or triggers, and make sure people have an environment where it is conducive to quitting."



Stevens

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Solution on Page 8A

5		4			3	8
	7	3				
				4	7	
		5			9	6
	1	8	5			
6	9			7		
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Sudoku

Difficulty: ★★★★★

4	3	2	8	1	6	7	5	9
5	6	9	7	4	8	1	2	3
1	7	8	9	5	2	4	6	3
3	4	7	2	8	5	6	9	1
2	1	6	7	4	9	3	8	5
9	8	5	1	6	3	2	7	4
7	9	1	4	3	8	5	2	6
8	5	3	6	2	1	9	4	7
6	2	4	5	9	7	1	3	8

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