# ""Senate Bill 744 Sample Letter

Dear [*audience*],

Thank you for your interest in Senate Bill 744 ([SB 744](https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB744/Enrolled)), your investment in Oregon’s students, and for reaching out to learn more about this important legislation. Senate Bill 744 presents an opportunity for Oregonians to pause, review, and discuss the inequitable impacts of graduation policy and practice on students who have not been served well by our system. The pause allows for an opportunity to learn from other states and each other as we engage in a transparent, open engagement process that will result in recommendations on how to design a system that is equitable, accessible, and inclusive for all of Oregon’s students.

**What the bill requires**. SB 744 centers a community-driven vision for what the Oregon Diploma should signify and mean for all of Oregon’s students. Oregon’s graduation standards were first adopted in 2007. A pause is needed to respond to changes in society, education research, technology, and business and industry. The Oregon Department of Education is required to research other state graduation models, to research local implementation, and to intentionally engage with Oregon’s diverse students, educators, and communities, business and industry, and higher education partners to hear what Oregonians value and expect of the Oregon Diploma. The Department is tasked with identifying systemic barriers and inequities in how graduation requirements have been applied and making recommendations on high school diploma requirements that “address disparities and ensure that every student is on track to earn a high school diploma.”

ODE is required to submit a report to the Legislature and the State Board of Education by September 1, 2022 that may serve as a foundation for future action, including reimagining and rebuilding our education system in a way that more equitably serves all of Oregon’s students. Any follow up action will be determined by the Legislature and the State Board of Education.

**In Oregon, students are expected to meet learning requirements, including demonstrating sufficient knowledge and skill in reading, writing, and math.** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most students met three of nine Essential Skills proficiency requirements by passing state-approved assessments, in addition to meeting all other graduation requirements. In 2019-2020, due to COVID-19 disruptions to learning, the end-of-year tests that most students took for the purpose of fulfilling the Essential Skills proficiency requirement were suspended. SB 744 temporarily pauses the requirement that students must demonstrate proficiency in relation to the the Essential Skills, but leaves all other graduation requirements, including credits, courses, and the [Personalized Learning Requirements,](https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/OregonDiploma/PLR/Pages/default.aspx) intact. The [nine Essential Skills](https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/essentialskills/Documents/es_definitions_grad-requirements.pdf) are provided below. Only the first three have been assessed with state-approved assessment options, which has focused attention on a small subset of what was intended to be a comprehensive, wholistic educational approach:

1. *Read and comprehend a variety of text*
2. *Write clearly and accurately*
3. *Apply mathematics in a variety of settings*
4. Listen actively and speak clearly and coherently
5. Think critically and analytically
6. Use technology to live, learn, and work
7. Demonstrate civic and community engagement
8. Demonstrate global literacy
9. Demonstrate personal management and teamwork skills

**Reading, writing, and math are still required to receive a diploma in Oregon.** SB 744 retains stringent requirements for teaching and assessment of reading, writing, math and all other content areas within high school courses, as high school credit requirements are not changed by the new bill. To earn a diploma in Oregon, students must earn passing grades in 24 high school credits, including four years of language arts and three years of math. No other state requires more credits to graduate than Oregon does.

**Here’s what other states require for graduation.** Oregon’s high school graduation credit requirements are among the most extensive in the country; no state requires more credits to graduate ([Education Commission of the States](https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/high-school-graduation-requirements-03), 2019). Among our immediate neighbors, California, Washington, and Hawaii do not require students to provide additional assessment evidence, beyond passing grades in high school courses, to earn a diploma. Nationally, eleven states maintain high school exit examination requirements ([FairTest](https://www.fairtest.org/graduation-test-update-states-recently-eliminated), 2019).

Maintaining strong outcomes and supporting every student to graduate is a clear priority for all of us in Oregon.

Thank You,

*[District Respondent]*