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Dear Legislators:

Having just listened to the 4/30/21 public hearing held on HB 2001, noting how confused people were after Tina Kotek claimed color would not be a factor in staff retention even as the bill prioritized recently hired BIPOC employees over recently hired employees not-so-identified, I believe, like others who have testified, that this is a hastily conceived solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

Furthermore, it smacks of a regrettable forced-choice exercise encouraged in the 1980s to develop critical thinking: "Realizing that there are too many people on the lifeboat, who should be thrown off?" When the political division at that time pitted liberals against conservatives, teachers who thought they were pushing the envelope on seeking creative solutions to making impossible choices found themselves attacked for abusing children by having them make such a choice.

I prefer exercises that encourage creative thinking over deciding who gets tossed out of the lifeboat. This practice of creating unfair choices and demanding that people tell which choice they would make is what HB 2001 has done to thoughtful candidates running for school board seats in this current election. It puts them in a box where anything they say might be held against them. Plus, it gives their opponents ammunition to attack them.

I am about to mark a box that declares "I'm not a robot"—neither are you. I understand Tina Kotek's concern and appreciate her effort to clarify the process that became so unclear after she spoke, but, as legislators seeking to improve education across the State of Oregon, you should be focusing attention on how to encourage, facilitate, and strengthen BIPOC inclusion in our educational system while supporting others recently hired who seek a career that might allow them to improve the lives of children and to realize their potential in this field.

Respectfully yours,

Gregg Heacock

