

March 26, 2013
Re: SB 215 and SB 501

Dear Senate Education and Workforce Committee,

Please find attached my testimony from two of the hearings held by the Oregon State Board of Education in April and May, 2012. I am in favor of upholding the ban on "Indian" mascots in Oregon public schools and in favor of sanctions if the Districts with such racist mascots fail to honor the terms of the ban. The Board of Education and the ODE did an excellent job presenting the facts via professional testimony that proves such mascots are extremely harmful to our Native American students.

I live in the Molalla River School District and am outraged that my tax dollars support a District that clings to a racist "Indian" cartoon. Removal of sanctions would allow these Districts to continue to embrace racism. There is no room in America for attempts to find an "acceptable level of racism". The State Board of Education and the Oregon Department of Education are working hard to provide equal education for all our diverse population. Profiling and abusing Native Americans can no longer be tolerated.

Please do not pass SB 215 and SB 501. **A vote for either is a vote for racism and a vote to deny our smallest minority civil rights.**

Sincerely,
Susan Hansen
PO Box 50
Molalla Oregon 97038

April 27, 2012

Dear Oregon State Board of Education,

I am in favor of banning Indian mascots in Oregon public schools.

I am heartsick, given the facts and the long opportunity for schools to make voluntary changes, that we are here today debating this issue. I am very upset that my taxes go to support an education system that has failed to respect the civil rights of Native Americans. It is hurtful that we would allow Native Americans to be turned into objects, per the definition of mascot, that represent lucky charms often used to market and advertise products. What a hurtful message that sends.

I have reviewed the reports filed by a myriad of educational and psychological experts. The Civil Rights Commission called for an end to "Indian" mascots in 1991 noting that mascots are "particularly inappropriate and insensitive in light of the long history of forced assimilation that American Indian people have endured in this country." I hope every member of this Board has taken the time to carefully read those compelling professional and legal documents? Those reports all say that Native American mascots are harmful to the Native American students, that they are racist and sexist. These mascots trap Native Americans in the 16th to 18th centuries. They are all male images and generally represent warriors. They are historically inaccurate. They reduce a proud culture and a race of people to cartoon stereotypes. They fail to honor Native Americans for their current high contributions as contemporary Americans.

I live in the Molalla River School District where Che Butler's family was subjected to that horrible mascot display. I was inspired by Mr. Butler's powerpoint. I called Molalla High School Principal Randy Dalton two weeks ago to find out what changes had been made by Molalla. Dalton said he believed the mascot would have to go but had done nothing to help the students and their parents understand the issues. No attempts have been made to use curriculum that the Grand Ronde Tribes have told me they have available to teach the true history of their Tribes.

Superintendent Wayne Kostur told me that all new uniforms were supposed to have had "Indian" removed but that some basketball shorts had "just slipped through". Kostur also indicated that the auditorium floor, which features a large image of the Indian mascot with the war bonnet, would soon need to be refinished and that it would be easy to sand out the image.

Obviously, both the High School Principal and the Superintendent of Molalla Schools realize there is a need for change. Yet, the Superintendent and the Molalla School Board have completely failed to inform the community about the civil rights issues connected to the cartoon Indian mascot. So we now have the angry community blowback about saving the war bonnet Plains Indian mascot. Why wasn't education about needed mascot change mandated back when this issue first came up in 2006?

I checked the local newspaper archives to see what the paper had been printing. In the past year headlines had phrases including:

Hammer Molalla Indians
Can't hide Indian pride
Indians skid
Indians conquer
Indians crush
Indians run over
Indians claw
Indians kept digging
Molalla Indians pounded
Indians execution was sloppy, their energy was lacking
Indians fall to Indians
1234 Indians add one more

To add more insult, the word Indian has been morphed into Indianettes for the school's dance team.

The Molalla Indians boys' soccer schedule appeared in the paper with an image of a giant arrow shaft. The complete sports schedule prominently featured the Indian in a war bonnet mascot in color.

The High School auditorium has the large Indian wearing a war bonnet on the floor. How can it be right for students to run over, drip sweat on, and dribble balls on top of that image of the Indian the school is supposedly honoring?

The MRSD had a hazing case a few years ago and 5 students went to jail for sexual abuse of another athlete. A MRSD high school teacher is currently awaiting trial for allegedly sexually abusing a student. We have anti-bullying campaigns; we have serious behavior problems in schools, so how can we ignore this important civil rights issue which could add to problems? If schools couldn't follow the gentle ask to have changed these racist mascots by now, we certainly can't trust them to do it voluntarily. The Board should demand immediate compliance – these schools already had over 5 years to change.

Small towns should not be teaching the children that these race based mascots are acceptable, only to have the children grow up and go out into the greater world and learn it wasn't acceptable. Aren't the small towns actually limiting their futures and their children's' future's by presenting and trying to protect this kind of disrespect of Native Americans, when most places and institutions have abandoned race based mascots?

I reject any cost factor as a reason for ending Native American mascots. The same false arguments are made every time civil rights issues arise, including access for handicapped. The cost of compliance has no bearing in civil rights. I would imagine failing to implement a ban will leave the schools and the State Board highly vulnerable to civil rights law suits which could be far more costly than producing new mascots.

I count among my most inspiring and touching learning experiences the stories and factual historical accounts the members of the Grand Ronde Tribes presented in recent years in Oregon City. The Molalla area was used for thousands of years by amazing people, who tended the wild, lived sustainably and loved mother earth. Their offspring, who are our fellow Oregonians today, aren't honored by being objectified as lucky charms for children. They aren't honored as contemporary Americans because their civil rights are being violated. We need to truly honor our Native American fellow Oregonians by immediately abandoning all race based mascots in Oregon.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,
Susan Hansen
PO Box 50
Molalla Oregon 97038

May 17, 2012

Dear State Board of Education,

I strongly endorse the proposal to ban "Indian" mascots. I embrace the myriad of professionals who have outlined how harmful it is for Native Americans to be the only race in our nation stereotyped as cartoon lucky charm mascots. I embrace the 1991 Civil Rights statement and the letter the ACLU submitted.

Molalla and other Districts are trying to play the white majority privilege card to keep their "Indian" mascots. On April 27, Molalla School Board member Ralph Gierke, noting the Che Butler complaint, told you "*I could have shot the administrators who never told us about it. It never came to the School Board. Had it come to me I would have gone frankly ballistic.*"

If MRSD was serious about doing something about racism and civil rights, wouldn't the District be eager to educate our community? In fact, the opposite has happened. A scheduled community meeting on public school choices was informed that the District would not participate unless we agreed not to bring up the mascot. In a public information request, the District could not verify potential costs, provide the number of Native American students or document the claimed approval of the mascot by the last chief, let alone any contact with Tribes. Uninformed Board member Gierke actually said to you that Hispanic mascots would be endangered if we banned "Indian" mascots.

The ways Molalla stereotypes and disrespects Native Americans are endless, including rows of Indian heads with war bonnets spray painted on lockers, advertising sign Indians, a totem pole, a teepee, a metal Indian head with war bonnet, orange foam finger Indians and clothes with slogans like Fear the Indians and How About Them Indians. Internet sites sell items like Molalla Indian car floor mats and cell phone covers. The entire "Indian" mascot culture is dishonorable, historically inaccurate and smacks of playing "Indians" at a 1950's summer camp for white kids.

Molalla's Gierke acknowledged on April 27th that "*there is prejudice and lack of respect...*" but immediately began to complain about the cost to change the mascot.

Yesterday, the Molalla Pioneer published this letter from Kirk Gilbertson, *Molalla*

(quote) "My son is one-fourth African American and has mentioned to me that he gets called all kinds of names around Molalla because of it. I kind of thought, "right," this is 2012; I am sure there can not be that much racism here.

My son ran home yesterday as a group of eight or so white teenagers probably around 15 years old called him the "N" word and yelled they were going to hang him. . . I went outside to see this group of teenagers looking to harm my son because of his skin color.

The group was so brazen they actually asked if my son would come out and talk to them. I yelled at the kids, stating, "Do you realize how illegal your actions are?" and (told them) to leave. We called the police and filed a report.

It is sad to see this in today's society and makes me wonder about living in Molalla. (end quote)

Molalla clearly has problems with racism and has a growing Hispanic population that exceeds 15%. Children would be fearful of exposing bullies and of challenging a School District on civil rights. We heard on April 27 that even high school "leaders" were not being taught about civil rights. Students are potentially subject to cover-ups and secrecy like we experience in Molalla. Americans are mobile and no one Tribe can represent the interests of all Native Americans so I reject waivers.

We can't ever put a cost on protecting civil rights and white majority wishes can't be a factor. Why would we dare to keep racist "Indian" mascots when we know they are potential civil rights flash points and are destructive to the self image of Native American students? In light of the volumes of expert testimony about how harmful these racist cartoon images are, I urge you to protect all our children and to honor our contemporary Native American fellow Oregonians with a universal ban on "Indian" mascots.

Susan Hansen
PO Box 50, Molalla Oregon 97038