

March 28, 2013

Honorable Senate Committee on Education and Workforce Development

I am Brenda Frank, a Klamath Tribes member and a descendant of the niimepoo people. I am a past member of the Oregon State Board of Education, of which I served as Chair the last two years of my tenure, 2005-2012.

I have reviewed the SB 215 and SB 501 that articulate the removal of authority from the State Board of Education from adopting standards or rules that affect a local school district from adopting a mascot and the use of sanctions up to withholding money.

To go back to the action of May 2012 that implemented the 'Mascot Rule' and the reasons as to why such an action was warranted by six reasonable diverse people one must first understand what the main motives were for such action. A person first needs to understand the philosophy and goal of the Board which is "Every Oregonian has inalienable rights and responsibilities for intellectual, political, religious and economic freedom which everyone should learn to appreciate and protect". Since 1951, the Board of Education continually strives to put forward the best educational standards and opportunities for **all** Oregonians to learn equally. This goal and belief is not taken lightly by those who serve the Board.

The mascot rule did not happen overnight or without hours of research, testimony, and discussion. The issue of an American Mascot goes back decades without a strong resolution as to why it was never laid to rest. *Why?* I cannot answer that question all I do know is that in 2007 when the issue came up the Oregon State Board stopped short of an all out ban with the intent of looking at the issue in five years (2011-12) to see if any movement toward change happened. Schools imbedded into the main thought that racist mascots are harmless did not change.

Every student in Oregon has equal access to high quality education services. The authority of the Board of Education is to insure this happens. If authority for mascots is removed what will be the next rule to be challenged when school districts, elected officials or constituents feel the rule violates what they want to do. It is a slippery slope when we whittle the authority the Board that has been standing for 62 years overseeing education standards for the State of Oregon. Who will be willing to challenge a long misinterpreted belief as acceptable if not for those who are elected to protect the rights of **all** citizens in the State of Oregon and those appointed by a Governor?

I sat through hours of testimony listening for a shred of evidence to defend the use. I heard threats, emotion and unfounded information as to why I would want to keep the mascot. None of the information presented was founded in fact or educational research. Dr. Samuel Henry stated he reviewed the 50 research documents on ERIC but did not find one that supported a race based mascot. Psychologists and their associations agree that race based mascots are harmful in the development of a child and marginalize their lives as being less than. How can a

race based mascot be beneficial when the mascot does not allow for the high quality of education services to be delivered from the school itself? How then can all students learn equally when a mascot singles out one race to feel alienated in their school and community?

The bills being proposed are simply retaliation for a rule by the Board that does not support the belief the elected officials were wrong. It negates that equality in the great state of Oregon does not exist and those that have the legislative power must be right. It negates the Pledge of Allegiance "...and justice for all." The action of either bill will reinforce that equal does not apply to the American Indians and their education.

To remove the authority of the Oregon State Board of Education on this issue will not allow them to oversee that all students of Oregon have equal access to quality education. It bounds them to retaliation from legislatures that feel empowered to come before the Board and demand rules on issues that are clearly not founded in the educational research.

In closing I believe now, as I did then in May 2012, that the decision of the Oregon State Board of Education was the correct one. I along with the newspapers and their editors, Tribal groups and other citizens wanting only the best for our citizens believe the rule was the conclusion of isolation and the inclusion of all equally.

Thank you for your time.



Brenda A. Frank
Klamath Tribes Member and citizen of Oregon