

House Education Committee

Dear Chair and Committee Members and Oregon State Representatives:

I am writing today in opposition to Senate Bill 215A.

As you are considering the merits of SB 215A, I would like to comment on why I feel that the rules/sanctions that the Oregon State School Board has issued are valid in order to make necessary changes in how students learn that acceptance of the use of names and mascots whose nationalities are being depicted as ferocious icons and unflattering characters are really a violation of civil rights. It is just a shame that it has to be mandated instead of students making the decisions based on being informed why it should be done.

My main concern about SB 215A is: How can the legislature determine the definition of discrimination on a local basis. To allow something on a local basis that may infringe on students from other tribes attending a school that is not closest to their original tribe is questionable. How can a local tribe sign agreements to allow local schools use of icons and names for sports teams that may affect students from other Oregon tribes if they attend a school that has approval of the local tribe but not theirs?. I foresee many legal problems.

I cannot believe that the local sports teams will accept icons of accurately dressed Molalla Indians as their school mascot and any other depictions will be misleading. Our local schools have failed to educate students on the hurt that can be caused from disrespect of one's birthright and differences and one never understands until they have never been on the wrong side of a slur. Non affected students will carry that acceptance for the rest of their lives in the same way that parents influence their children in their future lives and thus create a mindset that it is OK to demean other races and other nationalities because their school has the approval of the local tribe to use their name for their sports teams. While the intention may be to maintain tradition and honor the local tribe, the effect is to deliver a stereotypical message that perpetuates negative and trivializing views that could be applied to other nonconforming and diverse groups of people.

Instead of creating special exceptions for local tribes, make mascot and team name requirements statewide so that all students have the same level playing field concerning their civil rights. I salute those schools that have already changed their team names and mascots recognizing that it was the right thing to do.

Thank you for allowing me to comment on this legislative action.

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