

February 19, 2014

Re: Senate Bill 1538

To: Oregon State Legislature House Education Committee

This letter is being submitted on behalf of the Oregon Alliance for Education Equity (OAE) is in support of Section 4 to SB 1538. We strongly encourage the House Education Committee to support the Section 4 additions to ensure we support our community's most vulnerable children.

The Oregon Alliance for Education Equity (OAE) is a non-partisan coalition of community organizations that represent communities of color, English Language Learners, education advocates, families and other stakeholders. We are united to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in education and ensure that students of color and students learning English graduate prepared to be successful adults and global citizens.


The OAE strongly urges the committee to support Section 4 as it is currently introduced. The number of students of color in Oregon public schools has doubled over the past 15 years. Students of color comprised 16.3% (88,196) of public school enrollment in 1997. In the 2012-13 school years, they make up about 35% (198,922). This is a great asset for our state but Oregon schools struggle to meet the needs of these diverse youth.

We believe the opportunity for students to access alternative educational opportunities in their communities will help improve the success rates of our priority population students. Oregon has an unacceptable achievement gap and is one of seven states where the gaps between higher and lower income students widened from 2003 to 2011. The OAE shares the State of Oregon's commitment to achieve better outcomes for students of color, low-income students, and English language learners. By prioritizing these communities we are providing a pathway to ensure these students needs are being meet to keep them in school, on-time.

The proposed Section 4 aligns with the overall values and commitments framed by the Governor's education priorities through the Oregon Education Investment Board and 40-40-20 goals. We can only achieve these audacious goals by shifting policies to support the educational needs of student who are struggling to succeed in our schools.

Section 4 clearly affirms prioritizing these populations by attempting to eliminate arduous barriers for students of color and their families to access charter schools. We strongly urge the committee to approve that 50% of available slots in charter schools are made available to historically, underrepresented students of color, English language learners, and low-income students.

Sincerely,



Inger McDowell & Deborah Cochrane

*Co-chairs Oregon Alliance for Education Equity*