

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

I write to urge your support for HB4033 which amends ORS 342.950 to include advancing the goals of the Educators Equity Act through increasing cultural competence of Oregon educators and supporting culturally relevant instructional practices. There are several reasons for supporting this bill.

- The most recent State Report Card indicates that 36.4% of Oregon K-12 students are students of color while only 8.5% of Oregon teachers are teachers of color. The number of teachers of color has remained flat since 1997 when Oregon began tracking these differences. While student diversity continues to increase, diversity of the teacher corps has not. As a result, Oregon teachers face classrooms of increasing diversity with few materials or strategies specifically targeted to responding to that diversity. HB4033 offers an opportunity to target additional professional development resources to prepare teachers for the growing diversity they encounter in their classrooms.
- By increasing the preparation of teachers to provide culturally relevant learning experiences for students, an important connection between the classroom and the student is made. It is critical for students to encounter learning experiences that are relevant and meaningful to them in ways that validate and honor their cultural background and experience and that of their family. Accomplishing this requires preparation of lessons and selection of materials that are not routinely found in most Oregon schools and classrooms. Such strategies honor the diversity of the student and the student's family, thereby increasing connections to learning and honoring the personal identity of the student. Such connections increase learning, increase self-esteem, and contribute to students staying in school.
- The bill specifically adds enhancing the Educators Equity Act, cultural competence of educators and the use of culturally relevant educational practices to the framework of initiatives in the Network for Quality Teaching and Learning established by the Legislature. The Educators Equity Act is currently addressed in ORS 342.950 in Section 4, d, directing the Chief Education Office to provide "strategic direction" to the Educators Equity Act. HB4033 makes an important addition to the statute by also placing support for the Educators Equity Act and investment in teacher cultural competence in Section 3 of the statute which identifies areas for funding. This is an important signal that increasing the cultural competence of Oregon's education workforce will require additional investment in professional development of current teachers, recruitment and placement of new teachers, and development of culturally relevant materials and instructional programs. It is a significant statement to position this new language in the funding expectations of the existing statute.

From the original passage of the Minority Teacher Act through today, the development of a culturally competent educator corps in Oregon has been primarily aspirational with little specific investment in this area. HB4033 makes a significant contribution by adding this critically important area to the desired investment targets in the Network for Quality Teaching and Learning. A "yes" vote recognizes that addressing the needs of an increasingly diverse student population through culturally relevant educational experiences will require additional investment in and preparation of Oregon educators. I respectfully recommend approval of HB4033.

With Sincere Best Regards and Appreciation for your Work,

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IMPORTANT: The PSU Graduate School of Education is now located at 1900 SW Fourth Avenue, on the corner of SW Harrison and Fourth Avenue in the Fourth Avenue Building (FAB). More details at pdx.edu/education/move.