



Date: March 14, 2017

To: Oregon House Committee on Education

From: Alejandra Barragan, Oregon Education Association

Re: Support for HB 2845

Chair Doherty and Members of the committee, my name is Alejandra Barragan and I am a second grade Spanish immersion teacher at Alder Elementary in the Reynolds School District. I am a member of the Oregon Education Association and proud to speak on behalf of OEA in favor of HB 2845.

OEA represents over 44,000 members across the state of Oregon. Our members are educators working in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 public schools and community colleges. OEA's membership includes licensed teachers and specialists, classified/education support professionals (ESPs), community college faculty, retired educators, and student members.

OEA has been a part of conversations around this legislation with student leaders, and the over 50 endorsing organizations that have signed onto support ethnic studies standards since late last summer. Though educators have been engaged in research on the benefits of ethnic studies for decades. This legislation has had a significant amount of work put into it and we appreciate that OEA could give extensive feedback on it. We want to thank Representative Hernandez and his staff, the Oregon Student Association, Momentum Alliance, and the Asian American Pacific American Network of Oregon APANO for their leadership on this bill.

We want to note our support for this legislation from the perspective of the educators who will be engaged with the advisory group that this legislation forms to develop statewide ethnic studies standards, and as the individuals that would execute the work of teaching to these standards.

Our first reason for supporting HB 2845 is the benefit that it has for students in cultivating critical thinking. In 2011 the National Education Association published a research report titled *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies*. The report concludes that "...well-planned ethnic studies curricula are often very academically rigorous. Rather than being divisive, ethnic studies helps students to bridge differences that already exist in experiences and perspectives. In these ways, ethnic studies plays an important role in building a truly inclusive multicultural democracy and system of education."¹

The NEA report notes that "Beginning as early as elementary school, students have been found to respond to curricula based partly on what they learn and experience in their homes and communities." As an elementary teacher, I see that every day. This is another reason we support this legislation, students can learn about their own representation throughout history and connect with it and engage in it. In my own classroom this year in our immersion program we have purposefully selected text and experiences that reflect students in the classroom. Our second grade students had to learn the roles of

¹ Sleeter Christine, *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies*. 2011. <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NBI-2010-3-value-of-ethnic-studies.pdf>

judges, school board members, police officers, and fire fighters role in our community and the purpose of bills and policies. We introduced text on Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Sonia Sotomayor and invited our School Board Member Diego Hernandez so students had real experiences, and saw real people who look like them creating change in their own communities. This is not a novelty happening in our classrooms here in Oregon, but what HB 2845 does is not having to have arguments prepared for our administrators on why we need more inclusive texts in our curriculum.

Several studies summarized in the NEA report on ethnic studies note the positive impact ethnic studies can have on student engagement, academic achievement, graduation rates and student engagement.

Ethnic studies can help students form respect for each other and challenge each other as they learn about their shared experiences, commonalities and their differences when we teach about the experiences of everyone including ethnic and social minorities as HB 2845 lays out. By gaining knowledge and understanding of different cultures and histories, Oregon students are better equipped to participate in the global economy and engage with diverse communities.

The Oregon Education Association urges you to join us in supporting HB 2845 for the positive impact it can have on student academic achievement and engagement. Thank you so much for your time.