



TO: Rep. Margaret Doherty, Chair
Members of the House Education Committee

FR: Courtney Westling
Portland Public Schools

RE: Support for HB 2845

On behalf of Portland Public Schools (PPS) we offer our support for HB 2845 and commend the sponsors for their commitment to providing students a learning environment that accelerates their academic achievement and personal growth. Something we have seen first-hand at PPS.

PPS serves approximately 49,000 students, including 44.1% students of color in the 2016-2017 school year, and where the student bodies of Benson, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison and Roosevelt High Schools are all half or more students of color.

PPS has long recognized the issue and importance of ethnic studies to our student's success. In 2011 the PPS Board of Education adopted Resolution 4459, the "Racial Educational Equity Policy." This resolution lists closing the achievement gap between white students and students of color, while raising achievement for all students, as the top priority of the Board, Superintendent and all district staff. The resolution included a commitment that: "The District shall provide every student with equitable access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources, even when this means differentiating resources to accomplish this goal."

In 2016, the PPS Board of Education adopted a second resolution, No. 5262, a "Resolution to Develop an Implementation Plan for Ethnic Studies Curriculum" ensuring that ethnic studies courses would be offered in every PPS High School by the fall of 2018. Both of these resolutions were student-led and driven because they believed ethnic studies programs help improve student grades, reduce absenteeism, and result in higher graduation rates for all students. All of which become even more important as our community becomes more and more diverse.

HB 2845 represents an important step in making ethnic studies available to all students. By bringing the diversity already represented in the classroom into the curriculum, we will all better understand one another and provide our students with the tools necessary to succeed in today's diverse world.

In alignment with the District's recently passed ethnic studies resolution (No. 5431 adopted 3/14/17) and our commitment to ethnic studies in the classroom we urge your support of HB 2845.