

Kate Brown
Governor



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Testimony in support of HB 2845A Ethnic Studies
May 31st, 2017, Hearing Room F, 3:00pm
Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education

Co-Chairs Senator Monroe and Representative Smith Warner, Senator Roblan, Senator Thomsen, Representative Hernandez, Representative Lively, Representative Parrish and Representative Whisnant:

The Oregon Commissions on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, Black Affairs, Hispanic Affairs and Commission for Women support HB 2845 that will establish an Ethnic Studies advisory group convened by ODE. We believe that including ethnic studies in the social studies standards is a missing piece that not only provides more inclusive and relevant curriculum engaging all students but will do its part in improving dropout rates and other measures important to successful education for every community.

The Advocacy Commissions have historically supported efforts to improve inclusive teaching for social studies focusing on ethnic studies. Many past commissioners and current members, have highlighted the need for public school education across the state to represent ethnic and social groups with the widest cultural lens in their curriculum. Former OCBA commissioner and educator Carolyn Leonard was a pioneer in policy making in schools and leadership in developing Portland Public Schools Geocultural Baseline Essays. These essays recognized that public school education lacked a cultural lens in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Social Science, and the Arts. It serves as a foundation by which to inform and grow the standards and practice of ethnic studies in school districts across the state.

As part of the 1987 Geocultural Baseline Essays begun by Carolyn Leonard, Dr. Erasmo Gamboa, wrote "understanding the history of various Latino communities in the United States is no easy matter." Understanding the rich history and challenges of ethnic and social groups is a complex subject matter that Oregon educational institutions need to be talking regularly and robustly. In the Hispanic, Black, Asian, and Native American, as well as Women and LGBTQ communities in Oregon alone we carry so many varied histories that are seldom learned or discussed in our public education system. Our children thirst for cultural knowledge about our own and other communities that we live with and within.

We applauded the intentional action of ODE over the past decade to invest in programs like the Oregon Educator Equity Advisory Group and the yearly report on Oregon Educator Equity as

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well as sponsoring the first summit on social studies standards in many years. These are notable steps of progress that we welcome, encourage, and are participating in.

HB 2845 represents the next step in making ethnic studies part of the foundation of education in Oregon with all the benefits that provides for students, communities and the successful education measures Oregon needs to prosper. Thank you for your positive consideration of HB 2845.

Sincerely,



Chanpone Sinlapasai-Okamura
OCAPIA Chair



James Morris, OCBA Chair



Alberto Moreno, OCHA Chair



Dr. Barbara Spencer, OCFW Chair