



HB 4051: Rural Education Task Force

Letter of Support | February 5, 2018

To the House Committee on Education:

Oregon Student Voice (OSV) is writing in support of HB 4051 to convene a task force to include legislators, educators, administrators, and other key stakeholders to review data related to student outcomes in rural schools and recommend policy to better support rural schools. **We are also requesting that an amendment be made to include a rural high school student on the task force.**

Who we are. OSV works to ensure that all students are authentic partners with other education stakeholders in making decisions that affect their K-12 learning experience. As part of this mission, we actively promote student participation in the education policy-making process. We strive to advance policies that we believe will enhance Oregon's education system to better support all students and their learning.

Support of HB 4051. Throughout 2017, OSV has collected survey and focus group data from over 2,500 high school students across the state.¹ We heard many different student perspectives concerning Oregon's K-12 system. We have found that rural students encounter very different challenges in their learning environment in comparison to suburban or urban students. Rural students increasingly report concerns around access to (a) transportation, (b) Internet and other technology resources, (c) electives and college coursework, (d) safe school environments for all students, and (d) diversity of teaching in the classroom. We believe that special focus should be paid to the challenges faced by rural students to provide these students with increased educational and career opportunities. Therefore, passage of HB 4051 is a high priority for OSV.

Why include a student on the task force? Over the past decade, adults have been striving to address Oregon's K-12 challenges with limited success. We assert that there is no bolder way to approach policy reform than including students as authentic partners in decision making. Students understand the effects policies have on their learning. Further, when included in decision making, students offer important feedback and innovative ideas for reform. Providing students a seat on the task force will create meaningful conversations between all stakeholders and offer different perspectives on policy recommendations.

We hope that the House Committee on Education approves HB 4051 and considers our amendment to include a rural high school student on the task force. We are in the process of collecting rural student testimony in support of HB 4051.

Thank you for your consideration,
Oregon Student Voice

¹ OSV's report on the current state of Oregon's K-12 education system will be published on March 6, 2018.