



Reynolds School District
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TO: House Committee on Education
FROM: Dr. Linda Florence, Superintendent, Reynolds School District
DATE: February 6, 2018
SUBJECT: HB 4044

Chair Doherty, Members of the Committee:

Late last year at a Multnomah County Schools legislative summit, Rep. Helfrich and Sen. Thomsen listened as my colleagues and I discussed our varied workforce challenges. In addition to general questions about how we encourage our best and brightest to consider a career in teaching, we discussed the specific challenges of building a staff that reflects our school communities.

Over the years we have continued to see changes in the demographics of our student bodies, yet makeup of our teachers has remained largely the same. It is important that students see themselves reflected in the faces of school staff and administrators. Having teachers from a variety of backgrounds helps our students feel more at home while at school and encourages them to imagine a successful future for themselves. Also, research shows that cultural similarities between teachers and students can have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Within the Reynolds School District, we serve over 11,200 students. Of these, 41% are Hispanic/Latino, 33% Caucasian, 9% African American, 8% Asian, 8% Pacific Islander, and 1% multiracial. In contrast, our staff is roughly 93% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 2% Asian, and less than 1% African American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial.

Recruiting a more diverse staff is an important goal for us, but it is not an overnight shift. As mentioned above, we face challenges across the board with recruitment and retention in the teaching profession. Having a group dedicated to understanding these challenges and developing best practices and recommendations for recruiting teachers from targeted populations would be a help not only to our district but to the state as a whole.

I want to thank Rep. Helfrich and Sen. Thomsen for hearing us on this issue and for their efforts at addressing the problem. I strongly encourage you to give serious consideration to how we in Oregon can do a better job of recruiting and retaining teachers from all backgrounds.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda Florence".

Dr. Linda Florence
Superintendent
Reynolds School District
Fairview, OR

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