

# Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education

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As a student of Sprague High School, and a citizen of Oregon, I am here to testify about the importance of civic and social studies education to our students.

### Introduction

I join you today, as a student from Sprague High School. For the past 2 years, I have taken several advanced Social Studies courses including Honors World History, AP Human Geography, and AP US Government and Politics. I would like to share with you today, how integral my civic and social studies education has been to both my educational and personal growth.

### My Story

During my elementary and middle school years, at Schirle and Crossler, I grew a special disdain for social studies. The material, the teaching, and the greater purpose felt insubstantial. Why would my teachers devote so much class time to a boring subject that has so little educational or personal value? However, over my past two years at Sprague, I have grown a love for social studies and now hope to become a secondary education history teacher. The key change that triggered this drastic switch was how my education was approached. Before, history had been facts, and civics had been boring and confusing. When I entered high school, history came to life through stories, cause, effect, and present day applications. One of these applications was civic responsibility. Each of my history teachers have made a point of showing what happens when citizens do not properly engage themselves in government, emphasizing the importance of taking up our civic duty and fighting for what we believe in. There has been a greater focus on what history tells us about ourselves, others, and the world around us. This has opened my eyes to other worldviews, which has improved my communication skills, outfitted me to be a better voter, and empowered me to be involved with the world around me. The only area that I feel my education has been lacking, is teachings specifically related to Oregon's government and local political affairs. If government courses could be expanded beyond solely the federal government, citizens may feel more confident in local proceedings and seek to get involved. This is why comprehensive civic and social studies classes are essential to a quality education in

order to provide our students the proper foundation to step into the adult world, prepared to be thoughtful, active citizens.

**What this committee should know/do about civics/social studies education in Oregon.**

My experience in the Oregon public school system exemplifies how important civic and social studies education is to students. In the absence of purposeful teaching, in-depth civics explanation, and proper participation opportunities students are unable to build the appropriate skills that allow them to thrive in their adult lives. Depriving students of education of their rights and the functions of their democracy, is the equivalent to their rights and their participation opportunities being nonexistent. How would the government expect citizens to effectively participate if they won't properly educate them on how in their own schools? In a current society that has such low political efficacy, it is the responsibility of this committee, this state, and this country to allow our students proper access to teachers, resources, and opportunities so that they can build the civic and personal skills necessary to being an active participant in democracy.

**Conclusion**

I can attest that because of my civic and social studies education, I no longer join you as only a student. I stand before you as a politically active, educated citizen who feels confident in my abilities to navigate the adult world ahead of me. I owe this to the remarkable civic education that I have received these past 2 years and I believe that every student deserves the same. I urge this committee to fight for the rights of their citizens by fighting for the rights of students. We are the next generation, the future of Oregon, of America, and of the World. Fight for us, invest in us, and above all, teach us, allow us the resources to learn. Because when we teach our students what their civic responsibility is, and more importantly how to carry it out, we lead ourselves into a better Oregon, a better America, and a better World. Thank you for allowing me to share my story today.