

Hello, Chair Alonso Leon and members of the House Education Committee.

My name is Raymond Arias and I am a Latinx student at Tualatin High School, a public high school in the Portland Metro Area. I am also the former State President of the Oregon Association of Student Councils, a non-profit organization that seeks to serve middle and high schools around the state. As such, I write this testimony not only as a student of color in our education system but also as one who has had the privilege of representing thousands of minority students as well. While I can't speak to every one of my peer's experiences of those who have been affected by acts or symbols of discrimination, I can say that potential legislation such as House Bill 2697 is long overdue in our schools. Representations of discriminatory and hateful practices such as the Confederate flag, nooses, and Neo-nazi symbols should unequivocally be banned from ever having a place in Oregon schools.

Racism is non-negotiable. I plead you to accept and understand that truth. This should not be a polarizing matter. Each of our students should, at a bare minimum, be guaranteed comfort and safety in our education system. House Bill 2697 is a progressive step towards attempting to achieve that. I hope you all on the House Education Committee will try for a moment to put yourselves in our students' shoes, and make the right decision in supporting not only House Bill 2697, but, in turn, us as well.

Thank you.