



March 29, 2021

Co-Chair Lew Frederick

Co-Chair Susan McLain

Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

RE: [SB 5513 and Oregon's Education Budget for the 2021-23 Biennium](#)

Dear Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, and members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education,

As members of the **Oregon Partners for Education Justice**, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to **share our community-driven perspective on SB 5513**. We represent a cross-cultural network of community-based organizations, culturally specific service providers, and education advocates who are championing an inclusive, equitable, racially just, and community-centered public education system for Oregon.

In our 2021 Legislative Agenda (enclosed), the Oregon Partners for Education Justice are urging this Legislature to build on the promise of the Student Success Act and invest in a public education system that works for all—especially Black children, Indigenous children, children of color, low-income children, children in rural communities, children experiencing disability, and immigrant and refugee children.

The Oregon Legislature has a pivotal responsibility to ensure that state resources are being spent equitably to meet the needs of children who have been historically underserved by Oregon's education system and are now disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. To overcome unacceptable racial disparities and promote an equitable recovery, Oregon's education budget for the 2021-23 biennium must prioritize investments in culturally responsive programs, services, curriculum, and supports that respond to the diverse strengths and needs of Oregon students. And to make statewide impact, this Legislature must use every tool available to ensure that in a local-control state like Oregon, school district administrators are meaningfully engaging and listening to historically underserved children, students, and families when deciding how state resources are being spent to meet diverse needs at the local level.

The Student Success Act offers a guide for how state leaders can support school districts to work in true partnership with local communities to make equitable spending decisions through transparent, accessible, and inclusive processes. For a more equitable recovery, we urge this Legislature to embed the Student Success Act's values and expectations throughout the state budget to ensure all education funds—including the State School Fund—are closing opportunity gaps, improving student outcomes, and sparking systemic change.

The Oregon Partners for Education Justice ask you to fully support the following budget priorities, many of which are included in the Governor's Recommended Budget for 2021-23:

- **Full and dedicated funding for the Student Success Act, including new and expanded programs:**
 - **\$27.7 million** for the **Early Childhood Equity Fund** to expand access to culturally specific early learning programs provided by community-based organizations and Tribal Nations.
 - **\$28.1 million** to support the **Early Childhood Professional Learning System**.
 - **\$986.2 million** for the **Student Investment Account**, the state's largest equity investment designed to close academic disparities and meet the mental and behavioral health needs of historically underserved student populations.
 - **\$6.3 million** for **Summer Learning Grants for Title I Schools**.
 - **\$25.2 million** for **Oregon's Statewide Equity Plans**, including:
 - **\$14.4 million** for the **Black/African American Student Success Plan**
 - **\$4.1 million** for the **Latino/a/x and Indigenous Student Success Plan**
 - **\$8.4 million** for the **American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Plan**
 - Increased investment in the **Educator Advancement Council**, including new investments to **recruit, retain, and support a diverse educator workforce**; **\$14 million** to develop an **anti-racism initiative for educators** and create an **Indigenous and Tribal Educator Institute**; and **\$1.3 million** to provide **professional learning opportunities for Ethnic Studies [SB 227]**.

- **Additional investments in the Oregon Department of Education to advance and embed equity in the K-12 education system, including:**
 - **\$334,033** to convene an advisory group to develop **Social and Emotional Learning Content Standards for K-12 schools**. [HB 2166 -1]
 - **\$646,331** to review **Discipline Data on Suspension/Expulsion in K-12**. [SB 328]
 - **\$250,000** to conduct an **Equitable and Inclusive Review of Oregon's Diploma Requirements**. [SB 744]
 - **\$5.8 million** to develop a **Pilot Program for Culturally Responsive, Trauma-Informed Mental and Behavioral Health Services and Interventions** for K-12 Students. [HB 2368 -2]

- **Additional investments in Oregon's Early Learning Division to advance and embed equity in early learning and child care systems, including:**
 - **\$5.8 million** to **Reduce/Eliminate Suspension and Expulsion in Early Childhood Programs**. [SB 236 / HB 2166 -1]
 - **\$900,000** to establish a **Tribal Early Learning Hub**. [HB 2055]

In Governor Brown’s investment criteria for American Rescue Plan funds, we were encouraged to see an emphasis on public accountability and participation when deciding how resources are spent. “These funds are game-changing in size and scope,” she writes, “and the public needs to see—and inform—how these dollars will work for them.” Oregon Partners for Education Justice is calling on this Legislature to make the same commitment to Oregon students and families in the state budget: **To advance equity, accountability, and a stronger recovery, we need state leadership to ensure communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis are meaningfully engaged by school districts when deciding how all public education resources are spent.**

We hope this Committee will invest in these community-driven priorities as an essential step toward advancing a more inclusive, equitable, and racially just education system for Oregon’s children.

Sincerely,

Oregon Partners for Education Justice

Adelante Mujeres	KairosPDX
Unite Oregon	FACT Oregon
Black Parent Initiative	Latino Network
Consejo Hispano	Coalition of Communities of Color
Asian Family Center	Oregon Student Voice
Africa House	EUVALCREE
Early Literacy Success Alliance	REAP, Inc.
Self Enhancement, Inc.	Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality
Foundations for a Better Oregon	Children’s Institute
Oregon Business Council	Stand for Children Oregon
Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)	Central Oregon Disability Support Network
Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)	Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)
	Oregon Coalition of Community Charter Schools (ORC3S)

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ENCLOSED:

2021 Legislative Agenda – Oregon Partners for Education Justice

OREGON PARTNERS *for* EDUCATION JUSTICE

2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Across Oregon, families, educators, and communities are stepping up to make sure children aren't left behind. Now is the time to rethink how Oregon's public education system works with communities to support children and families who are disproportionately impacted by school closures and the ongoing injustice of systemic racism.

This community-driven agenda charts Oregon's next steps toward building an inclusive, equitable, and just public education system during and beyond COVID-19. **During the 2021 Legislative Session, the Oregon Legislature can make a difference in the lives of historically underserved children and families with policies and investments that:**

- Ensure distance learning and school reopening is fully accessible, engaging, and culturally responsive.
- Ensure every child has access to high-quality, culturally sustaining early learning opportunities.
- Promote anti-racist learning environments where every child feels like they belong.
- Recognize how critical community partners support children's unique learning, social, emotional, and cultural needs.

As Gov. Kate Brown proposed in her Recommended Budget for 2021-23, fully funding the landmark Student Success Act (SSA) is a clear path toward prioritizing equity as a core value of our public education system. By building on the promise of the SSA, we can create a public education system that works for all—especially Black children, Indigenous children, children of color, low-income children, children in rural communities, and far too many more who are underserved by the system as it stands.

WHO WE ARE

Oregon Partners for Education Justice is a cross-cultural network of community-based organizations, culturally specific service providers, and education advocates who are championing a racially just and community-centered public education system for Oregon. We believe in the vision, wisdom, and leadership of impacted communities, and advocate for equitable policies and investments that eliminate disparities and empower historically underserved children.

I. BUILD ON THE STUDENT SUCCESS ACT AS A FOUNDATION FOR EQUITY

SSA Early Learning Account

- Prioritize funding to expand access to **high-quality, culturally sustaining early learning programs**, including culturally specific early childhood and kindergarten transition programs.
- Prioritize investment in **professional development and pay equity for the early childhood workforce**.

SSA Student Investment Account

- Prioritize investments that **target support for historically underserved students**, who are now disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.
- Prioritize investments in **culturally responsive mental and behavioral health services** in partnership with communities.
- Require school districts to **engage historically underserved students and families in local planning and budgeting decisions**.

SSA Statewide Initiatives

- Prioritize investment in **Summer Learning Grants for Title I schools** to mitigate learning loss for low-income students, which is exacerbated by school closures.
- Increase investment in **Oregon's statewide equity plans**—including the **Black/African American, Latino/a/x, American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Plans**—to honor community self-determination and invest in community-based organizations as partners supporting students.
- Support the **Educator Advancement Council** and other policies to recruit, train, and retain a **racially diverse educator workforce**; develop a statewide **anti-racism initiative for educators**; and create an **Indigenous Educators Institute**.

II. HOLD OUR PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM ACCOUNTABLE TO ALL STUDENTS

- To successfully implement Oregon’s statewide Ethnic Studies standards, **invest in anti-racist curriculum development and professional development for educators.**
- To effectively support every child’s social and emotional learning (SEL), **direct the State Board of Education to adopt equitable SEL content standards and provide technical assistance to school districts for implementation.**
- To ensure schools are effectively measuring student progress and success, **adopt an inclusive process to review Oregon’s high school graduation and “Essential Skills” requirements.**
- To prepare every young person for the future, **expand career-connected learning and youth employment opportunities (including STEM access) for historically underserved students.**
- To ensure the diverse and unique cultural traditions of our students are respected and celebrated, **allow tribal regalia to be worn at graduation ceremonies and school events.**
- To honor the many cultures of Oregon’s students and expand access to electives, **allow students to fulfill high school language arts requirements in languages other than English or through English Language Learner coursework.**
- To create a more coherent and equitable resourcing strategy for Oregon’s public education system, **increase transparency and accountability in how State School Fund dollars are spent at the local level.**

III. LIFT UP COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS IN A SHARED COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

Advancing equity requires including impacted communities in the policy process, from design to implementation to evaluation. This agenda stands in solidarity with communities across Oregon who are advocating for an equitable and racially just public education system for children during the 2021 Legislative Session:

Reimagine Oregon is uplifting policy solutions to stop the school to prison pipeline by addressing hate and bias incidents through Oregon’s anti-bullying laws; eliminating in-school arrests and zero tolerance discipline policies; and diverting funding from punitive measures to restorative justice practices.

Oregon’s Early Childhood Coalition is advocating for policies that address racial disparities in access to culturally responsive early learning opportunities, including eliminating suspension and expulsion in early care and education programs; mandating an Early Childhood Equity in Access report; urging Congress to keep children safe from ICE in early childhood settings; and supporting the creation of a Tribal Early Learning Hub to consult directly with Oregon’s nine federally recognized tribes.

OREGON PARTNERS *for* EDUCATION JUSTICE

We envision a racially just, community-centered public education system that supports every child with equitable access to safe, inclusive, and welcoming learning environments, ensuring all children in Oregon are empowered to grow into thriving global citizens.



Salem/Keizer Coalition for Equality

