

Chair Alonso-Leon, Vice-Chair Neron and Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the committee:

My name is Janelle Bynum and I represent House District 51, which includes East Portland, Damascus, Gresham, Boring, North Clackamas, and Happy Valley. I am here as a legislator, a mother, and a voice for the marginalized.

In places like SE Portland there is a growing disconnect between educators working at the schools and the students. SE Portland is currently suffering from a growing wave of gun violence, lack of access to culturally fluent mental health care and economic uncertainty. I am here to advocate for a bill that can help my constituents with all of these issues.

HB 2942 diversifies the educator workforce through allowing educators to meet school students where they are at. Some educators in Oregon don't understand the background and challenges students face. This bill would allow for staff and educators from all backgrounds to have positive effects on our society.

HB 2942 starts the conversation about what should be allowed in the rubric for districts to consider when hiring people with prior convictions. People who have these lived experiences right now are prohibited from employment. I want to work with my fellow lawmakers and stakeholders to find a path forward that updates the current system which creates a lifelong penalty for prior mistakes. I hope Oregonians will start to see the value in giving districts the choice to hire people with these life experiences.

In places like SE Portland, there is a persistent complaint from generations of students which is that staff and educators don't look like them, don't sound like them and aren't communicating effectively with them. What this has caused is a deepening dissonance that has led to unsatisfactory learning outcomes for these students. Thus, deepening the achievement gap in Oregon. With this bill we have an opportunity to dismantle the structures that have in part caused this problem and begin again.

I urge you to support HB 2942 and welcome any feedback you have to offer.