

Good afternoon, Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the House Education Committee

My name is Rowan Kelleher, and I am a senior at Tigard High School. I am also Tigard HS's student representative to Tigard-Tualatin School District's Board of Directors, and Vice President of the Tigard Tualatin Student Union.

Over the past year, I have been able to collaborate with other student leaders to create change in my district, not only regarding racial equity but regarding gender equity and other major issues in our education system. Every single time student leaders like myself push for change we feel resistance from adults. Students are the primary stakeholder in education, but the decision-making process doesn't always reflect this. The constant effort of convincing adults in our district that students' input is valuable can make it a difficult task to push the district to pass something even as basic as a resolution condemning racism, or a hate speech policy. This is in addition to the typical patronization and lack of recognition that students are often met with. Not every adult in my district makes this process more difficult, and many prove very valuable and helpful to myself and other students. But, my district is not every district. I cannot begin to imagine how difficult student advocacy, especially concerning racial equity and justice, must be for students in districts where they don't have the adult support I have received.

Establishing a racial equity and justice student council is a necessity. Giving students the direct ability to advocate for racial justice and equity would alleviate the difficulty students currently face when trying to create change in their schools. As I said before: education exists to educate students. Under no circumstances should students be left out of conversations about our education, especially those students who have historically been oppressed, underrepresented, and forgotten by our education system.

I urge you to focus on who deserves your attention and pass this bill.

Thank you.