

Good afternoon, Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the House Education Committee. My name is Samantha Ramos. I am a Latinx junior at Tualatin High School. I'm writing today on behalf of my support for HB 3363. This bill is important to me because I grew up in the Tigard Tualatin School District always feeling like there was something missing that prevented me from expressing myself to my full potential. This was the lack of cultural equity. I grew up eager to be in the harder classes with all of the "smart" kids. Lo and behold, I was the only, or one of the very few minority students in those classes. I came home every day to tell my family I was the only brown girl in my class. One day, after celebrating a Mexican holiday in the morning, I came to my fourth-grade classroom wearing my traditional Mexican clothing. This included loads of red, white, and green. Although I was slightly embarrassed, it made me proud that I was able to go to school with a part of home. The other kids looked at me judgmentally, some even laughed at my hair bows, and that is the day I realized I could never share my culture and traditions. I was the brown girl in the stereotypical white classroom filled with students who lived in the suburbs. This experience obviously did not fully shape my depiction of the district and their way of showing cultural equity, however, it did help shape me into the person I wanted to become. I wanted to become a strong Latinx girl who wasn't afraid to represent her culture and her people. I finished elementary school, flew by middle school, and am in my third year of high school. I am currently this year's MEChA president at Tualatin High school. Being able to represent my position and be a part of this group allows me to connect and spread awareness to people from many different backgrounds. I can fully assure I am now at the peak of representing minorities in my school district. This is why I urge you to vote yes to HB 3363 to allow BIPOC to finally get their undervalued chance to speak out.

Thank you for your time.

Samantha Ramos