

To Whom It May Concern:

We are submitting testimony in strong support of SB 617:

“Directs State Board of Education to ensure that certain academic content standards include sufficient instruction on histories, contributions and perspectives of individuals who are African American and to ensure that academic content standards in English include meaningful instruction on literary contributions of African American authors.”

According to the most recent data from Lee and Low Publishing, 76% of the publishing industry in the U.S. is white. This includes publishers, editors, and authors. This also means that in order to create “inclusive” libraries that represent young readers in the classroom, we have to be intentional about what books and histories are included; inclusion/diversity/anti-racist materials will not just happen without a clear mandate and a strong effort. And there are so many wonderful books by own voices BIPOC authors that should be included.

At Reading Is Resistance, our mission is to support the efforts of parents and teachers to start or expand anti-racist, anti-bias home or classroom libraries & reading experiences for youth and children and for those libraries to seed deeper conversations and opportunities for action around racial equity in our community. We know that reading books that reflect all children has significant positive impacts on their success in school, sense of self-worth and self-love, and even graduation rates.

We cannot continue to exclude our BIPOC communities' voices. Instead, let us take this as a time to offer materials that are explicitly anti-racist

Please show us that those in positions of power in our state are more committed to repair than harm; diverse, inclusive books in Oregon classrooms is one step of many that help us work together for a more just future. We urge the committee to support SB 617. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

[Reading Is Resistance](#) Co-Founders Farnell Newton and Zapoura Newton-Calvert