

Hello, members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Rachel Burstein, and I live in Eugene, in Representative Holvey's District.

I have an 8th grader and a 9th grader in Eugene schools, and another kid who graduated from high school here last year.

I want to speak about school funding. We keep saying we are going to close the opportunity gap for students in our schools, and we are finally starting to make some progress. We need to continue to invest in the kids who need it most, including marginalized groups such as students of color, students in poverty, English Language Learners, and other high-needs students. I urge you not only to continue funding all programs that work towards educational equity, but also to require accountability for such funds.

We need to make sure that funds earmarked for programs aimed at underserved populations are actually tracked to make sure they are spent on those intended uses. We need to know, for example, that extra funding aimed at kids in poverty actually goes to serve those particular kids in concrete ways. We have made improvements with English Language Learners specifically because districts have been held accountable as to how they spend the funds received for those kids. Let's do the same with funding for all underserved groups so that we can move towards true equity.

Of course, equity in education is not only about funding. Representation is equally important for all kids. 90% of Oregon teachers are white, and that does not come close to representing the growing diversity of our population. I urge you to support House Bill 2001, because 62% of the teachers of color in Oregon are recent hires, and we do not want to risk losing them and further widening the representation gap. We need to retain our teachers of color and at least retain our student/teacher diversity ratios, because our communities are only becoming more diverse. It has been proven that having diverse teachers benefits not only students of color, but ALL of our kids.