

Testimony in support, HB 2697A  
Senate Committee on Education  
Monday May 3, 2021, 3:15 PM

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen and Senators Gelser, Gorsek, and Robinson,

My name is Djimet Dogo, and I am a member of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA). The OCBA's role is to work toward economic, social, political, and legal equity for Oregon's black population. We do this through advocacy, public policy research, leadership development and partnerships.

I am here to testify in support of the House Bill 2697, requiring education providers to prohibit display of any symbols of hate on school property or in education program.

I represent the growing number of refugees who resettle in Oregon and who call Oregon home. Those refugees come from all over the world to Oregon for the betterment of their lives and to give bright future to their children. Those refugees and their children are already traumatized by what happened in their home countries. Unfortunately, they have been re-traumatized by the hate symbols and bias crimes all over again, including on school properties and in educational programs. These symbols are used to bully our children because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion and that affects our children's education. We risk our lives to bring them here, for them to have a bright future. These hate symbols threaten the values of the school and the larger community, as well as the physical safety and mental-well-being of our children who are affected.

I have a 9 year-old son who loves going to school. Every day, by 7am he is already about to go to the school bus stop because he does not want me to drop him at school. He loves being in the bus with other kids. But one day last year before Covid, I saw him not ready for school by 7am. I asked him if he has no school today. He said he does not want to go to school anymore, and he felt so sick. He said that another student bullied him in the class, at the recess and in the bus home, saying that he has a Muslim name, therefore is not welcome here because the president (Trump) said that Muslims are bad people. I took my son to school and talked to the teacher and the teacher talked to the other student and his parents. I tried to move my son to a private school but after visiting and touring the private school, my son refused to move to private school because he did not see a single black student there. For too long, words and symbols that demean, harass, promote hatred or show intolerance of religious groups and racial minorities have not been considered as a form of bullying but they are. Those words and symbols have strung over our school's system without people noticing or even thinking it is a form of bullying.

I urge that hate symbols such as confederate flags, along with the swastikas, nooses, racial epithets, graffiti and other symbols promoting hatred be banned from school properties and programs, and that also includes hate symbols on clothing, vehicles and school-related events.



Our children deserve to feel safe and welcome in our schools and I urge that we should ensure safety and inclusion of all students by banning all hate and bias symbols from school grounds and programs. We want to make sure that hate symbols are not used to bully our children and I support HB 2697.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Djimet Dogo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Djimet Dogo, OCBA Commissioner

