

Aishiki Nag
House Committee on Education
Re: Support SB 702B

May 19th, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the committee,

Hello, my name is I'm Aishiki Nag and I'm currently a high school student residing in Washington County. I am in strong support of SB 702.

In the 7th grade, my teacher introduced me to critical thinking and learning more about current events. We opened class very solemnly, with a printed article about the Parkland Shooting, which then led us to a comprehensive conversation exploring the pros and cons of gun legislation. This sparked my own personal journey into becoming more connected with the community. I was lucky enough to have a teacher who was willing to introduce critical thinking when it came to current events and legislation that directly impacted my life. Throughout my journey through public education, I could see a clear disconnect between students and the government, especially when it came to local government. Over the summer of 2020, I saw a rise in political awareness amongst my peers, trying to spread information through social media, creating and signing petitions, as well as emailing lawmakers. However I continued to notice that my peers didn't totally understand the implications of what they were doing, and the schools were doing little to let them know how they can play a bigger role in the community.

Good civics education can start in the classroom. Students deserve to know how their government works, and how they can participate to voice their own opinions in the system. Representatives are elected to serve everyone, including people younger than 18, but students simply don't have the resources to voice their concerns. According to *Guardian of Democracy; The Civic Mission of Schools*, "Effective civics education leads to students being more likely to vote, four times more likely to volunteer and work on community issues, and are more confident to speak publicly." Civic education opens up opportunities and encourages strong civic participation amongst the youth. It's important that we raise civic engagement, and we also open up career opportunities.

Recently I was inspired to ask my peers questions that they would like to ask the school board. To my surprise, most of the people at my high school had no idea what their school board did and what powers they had in our lives. There was a higher number of POC youth that lacked this vital information of civics education. I'm doing my part as a student to spread information - I led a short voter registration campaign for the May 2021 School Board elections with my friend and used some school resources, and right away we saw more civic engagement. If we were to do this on a larger scale, we would have a higher number of registered voters as well as a better-educated voting body.

One way we can improve this is to have a larger conversation around what civics education looks like, and how to emphasize key areas like: Voting rights and how to vote; Current and historical social movements; The roles of local governments and tribal governments; and The United States Constitution, the Oregon Constitution and the constitutional form of government in this country. SB 702 does exactly this, and it's extremely needed. The legislation also involves the opportunity for community input.

One of the best ways to lead change in the community is through solid education, and our current standards would benefit from an in depth discussion specifically around civics. I urge you to pass SB 702.

Sincerely,
Aishiki Nag