



TO: House Committee on Education
FROM: Nancy Haque, Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon
DATE: 2/3/2022
RE: Support for HB 4099

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the House Committee on Education,

Basic Rights Oregon strongly supports House Bill 4099, which would create a statewide Racial Equity and Justice Student Collaborative. Our organization fights for the lived equality of all LGBTQ2SIA+ Oregonians, with an emphasis on racial justice and advocating for queer youth.

All kids in Oregon deserve to feel safe and be given opportunities to thrive, but unfortunately not all of our youth have the same advantages. Kids from underrepresented and underserved communities face unique risks and have unique needs. The collaborative that is created by HB 4099, which is by them and for them, will increase their chances of success.

In the summer of 2020, school administrators across the state invited students of color to share their experiences of racism at school. During a Zoom meeting for this purpose, an intruder “Zoom bombed” the meeting and put red Xs over the students’ photos, traumatizing students of color with racism even as they tried to share previous their challenges. This disruption is what first inspired students to create a collaborative where they would be safe to share their stories, and come up with policies that can uplift other underserved students in Oregon.

The Racial Equity and Justice Student Collaborative will include students of color, LGBTQ2SIA+ kids, bilingual students, kids from immigrant families, and students with disabilities ranging from 11 to 18 years old. At least two students from each Education Service District region will serve on the collaborative, and students will pursue culturally-specific, community-based models and best practices of student leadership. The collaborative will be tasked with supporting students experiencing racism, making recommendations to state lawmakers, and increasing student engagement in the policymaking process.

Unfortunately, racism is an everyday occurrence for Oregon students of color. The Racial Equity and Justice Student Collaborative will empower these youth to build the support networks and policies that best serve them. We urge you to vote “yes” on HB 4099.

Thank you.