

**COURTNEY NERON**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
**DISTRICT 26**



## **Testimony in Support of HB 4099**

February 3, 2022

Thank you Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the House Education committee.

**I write today in support of House Bill 4099, a bill to elevate youth voice through a collaborative statewide conversation with Oregon youth, facilitated by ODE and informing policy making of high interest and impact to our youth.**

Our youth leaders have critical insight to offer policymakers. As a former youth leader myself, and later as a teacher advisor to high school student leaders, I value empowering conversations that elevate the voices of young people. I continue to consult with youth on issues, policies and proposed legislation that will impact their lives and prioritize their needs. They deserve to have their voices heard and included in policy making that impacts their lives.

This is why I introduced HB 3363 in 2021 and am back again with Rep Valderrama and Rep Ruiz and our growing list of co-sponsors to bring you HB 4099 this session. **The focus of this bill is to create a statewide council, referred to as a “collaborative” of youth from all over Oregon, with a focus on understanding and responding to racial injustices and inequities impacting youth from historically underserved and underrepresented communities, such as our LGBTQIA+ community, youth experiencing disability, and our rural communities.** The “collaborative” will ensure youth have a platform to voice their opinions about policies that impact them. Not only does this bill remove barriers to statewide youth leadership opportunities, it also gives these leaders the opportunity to shape how we engage more individuals from underserved and underrepresented communities on both a regional and statewide level.

The Oregon Department of Education has partnered with advocates through the creation of this bill and understands the goals of this legislation. On their [Equity Diversity Inclusion website](#) they **define education equity** as: “the equitable implementation of policy, practices, procedures, and legislation that translates into resource allocation, education rigor, and opportunities for historically and currently marginalized youth, students, and families including civil rights protected classes. This means the restructuring and dismantling of systems and institutions that create the dichotomy of beneficiaries and the oppressed and marginalized.”

The [LGBTQ2SIA+ plan](#) highlighted in their report that this “youth community is perceived by many as invisible due to” among other things, **“lack of institutionalized ways to integrate youth voice into education decision-making.”** This bill is one important way we can incorporate diverse youth voices into policymaking. Having a “racial equity and justice youth collaborative” will inform responsive policymaking by listening to, and learning from, the diverse experiences of our Oregon youth.

As the insidious nature of racism, ableism, and misogyny reveal themselves daily in our society, and instability and unrest from our years in pandemic response take their toll on the fabric of our communities, we must acknowledge now more than ever how persistent inequities in our systems further marginalize people who historically haven't had a voice at policy making tables.

Oregon's youth are the future of our state and are central to my legislative work. This bill creates a process for young people to help translate their strength and wisdom into advocacy and public policy. As a legislative body, we are accountable to thoughtfully fund education and robustly respond to youth needs. Listening for understanding and being committed to effective response is an essential starting point. **Please join me in a commitment to hearing our youth, recognizing their dignity and worth, honoring their diverse lived experiences and how they can positively impact our policy making, by supporting HB 4099.** Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Courtney Neron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'n'.

Rep Courtney Neron