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February 3, 2022

To: House Committee On Education  
From: Ginger Fitch, Staff Attorney

Re: **Support for HB 4099**

Dear Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the Committee,

Youth, Rights & Justice, as Oregon's only non-profit juvenile public defense firm, advances the rights of children, parents, and families through advocacy in the courts, schools, legislature, and community. Our work is grounded in the belief that our clients are at the center of all that we do. One aspect of our work includes ensuring that foster children and young people in the juvenile justice system have an opportunity for educational success. Every year, YRJ represents over 1200 children, youth and parents in Oregon's juvenile court system. Nearly all of our clients come from low-income families. Most have suffered significant trauma and many experience physical, mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Approximately 45% of our clients are people of color. Because of our unique position, we often see the same systemic problems and we work to change the policies that contribute to these problems.

YRJ supports House Bill 4099.

Youth, Rights & Justice believes that collaborative work provides better outcomes for youth. We actively and urgently take steps to counter the racism and bias that permeates our education systems and seek opportunities to ensure those most affected have a significant role in decision-making. Youth and their communities are well served by expanding their voice, their evaluation of data collected by the Oregon Department of Education, and their inclusion in making recommendations to the legislature and governor.