

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

My name is Miles Palacios and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Student Councils.

I am here today to speak in support of House Bill 4099, the Racial Equity and Justice Youth Collaborative.

My organization serves middle and high school aged youth throughout the state of Oregon, representing every region of our great state. Our association's strength is the diverse students we serve and seek to empower. Our executive board consists of adult and student voices equally, and the regional representation of those young voices is paramount to the success of our 73 year old organization.

We are a proof of concept that when addressing the needs of young people on a state level, young voices and geographic representation matter. HB 4099 requires that this collaborative will have a minimum of two youth members serving their peers from every Education Service District in Oregon. This is merely a floor—the collaborative will have the autonomy to further ensure that there is equitable representation of our state's many rich geographic and cultural regions.

This bill received bi-partisan support from this committee in the 2021 legislative session, and we thank you for supporting youth voice. The 2022 iteration of this concept has only made this more inclusive of the underrepresented voices of young Oregonians by including more underrepresented groups of young people, such as those navigating poverty.

There is a concept I love called proximate leadership, which subscribes to the idea that effective change for a population is possible when we elevate leaders who are a part of that group or meaningfully guided by that group's input, ideas, agendas, and assets.

When we are seeking effective change for young Oregonians, young voices deserve to be at the table in roles that honor and elevate their experiences.

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the committee – I urge your support.