

February 4, 2020

TO: Oregon House Education Committee
FR: Justin Low, Program Director of the Capitol Ambassadors Program
RE: HB 4099 Testimony

Dear Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the House Education Committee:

For the record, my name is Justin Low, and I am the former student programming lead of the Oregon Association of Student Councils and its current program director of the Capitol Ambassadors Program. As one of the staunch advocates and supporters of the previous iteration of this bill, I urge you to support and pass House Bill 4099.

In the over six years of working in student leadership development with the Oregon Association of Student Councils, I have witnessed many improvements and wins, both at the policy and community levels, when it comes to statewide racial equity and justice; I have also come across a multitude of gaps, pitfalls, and shortcomings as many other students, teachers, parents, and education leaders have over the last few years. The difference between the improvements and pitfalls center around one core concept: giving youth and students a seat at the table. When young people are given the resources, capacity, and agency to make decisions, the transformations that can follow are priceless. This state has already witnessed the power of youth-led and youth-supported policy decisions through examples like the historic implementation of Every Student Belongs and the allowance of mental health days for students.

It is time to give youth a statewide platform where leaders from across the various regions of the state can advocate for transformational policy that will aid their peers, especially those that come from historically, and currently, underserved and underrepresented communities. In my experience, no one knows better how to address the issues that youth are experiencing than the youths that are going through it themselves. This state doesn't just have a strong base of youth leaders, it has a roaring tide of leaders that are youth. Now let's give them the space to affect even more change.

When this bill was first introduced last session (HB 3363), it passed the House Education Committee with unanimous bipartisan support. I hope that it will continue to receive your support. Thank you for your time today. I urge you to vote yes on HB 4099.



Justin Low
Program Director, Oregon Association of Student Councils