



**COALITION OF  
OREGON SCHOOL  
ADMINISTRATORS**

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February 15, 2022

TO: House Education Committee  
FR: Superintendent Danna Diaz  
RE: SB 1521 Testimony

Good Afternoon Chair Alonso Leon and members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Danna Diaz, and I currently serve as the Superintendent of Schools for the Reynolds School District in East County of the greater Portland Metro area. I am glad to be with you today and urge you to quickly pass Senate Bill 1521.

Today I want to share some thoughts about our students and the realities my colleagues are experiencing right now.

**Senate Bill 1521 is Critical for Our Communities and Student Outcomes**

The past two years have been hard on everyone, but they have been especially hard on our students. As you know, COVID-19 has disproportionately affected people of color. Reynolds School District serves approximately 11,000 students of which 72% are students of color and 32% are English Language Learners. The disruption from isolation, quarantines, distance learning, safety, mental health, staffing shortages, and food and housing insecurity have greatly affected our students, families, and staff. Although a safe and stable instructional focus is our highest priority, it is often out of reach today.

Student achievement relies on stability as a core foundation, from the classroom teacher, to the building principal, to the district superintendent. Our children deserve a leader who will implement a five-year strategic plan that focuses on student outcomes. This requires a leader with a laser focus on that plan, not one faced with the worry that their students' foundation of stability is at risk.

Years of research and multiple studies confirm what we all know intuitively - stable leadership is critical for improving student outcomes and the success of our schools.

**Senate Bill 1521 is Critical for Attracting More Diverse Superintendents**

Without basic employment protections, diverse leaders will not be drawn to Oregon's leadership ranks. Our leaders are not currently representative of the students they serve and we won't make real progress on diversifying the ranks of superintendents without basic employment rights in place.



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This past month, a groundbreaking study authored by Education Northwest and commissioned by COSA, OSBA, and ODE detailed the challenges and barriers facing Oregon's superintendents of color.

The study noted that fewer than 5% of Oregon superintendents identify as people of color, despite the fact that nearly 40% of Oregon's K-12 students are racially and ethnically diverse.

The study is clear that in order to recruit, retain, and support diverse educational leaders, an important first step is providing basic employment protections such as those contained in Senate Bill 1521.

It is a fact that superintendents of color, especially women, are experiencing direct threats to their safety and the safety of their families. We should not also be subjected to the fear that we can lose our jobs for centering the needs of our students to ensure equitable outcomes for our communities. And especially not for simply following the law.

Thank you for the time today. I look forward to discussing this critical issue with you.