



February 22nd, 2022

Chair Michael Dembrow
Vice-Chair Chuck Thomsen
Members of the Senate Education Committee

RE: HB 4031: relating to ODE staff mirroring the diversity of students in Oregon Public Schools

Good afternoon,

My name is Chelsea Navarro, I use she/her pronouns and I am a senior at the International School of Beaverton in Beaverton. I am also the Policy Director for Oregon Student Voice. Oregon Student Voice is a state-wide, student-led nonprofit that empowers students to be active partners in education decision making.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for HB 4031. **Oregon Student Voice strongly urges you to pass this bill.** The Oregon Department of Education is in charge of rule making and governance of educational entities on a statewide scale. The staff of ODE should represent the diversity of our student body because that is who should be centered in their work. **Students deserve to be represented in educational decisions by people who look like them.** Oregon is a predominantly white state, which means that we need to make an even greater effort to make sure we are supporting students of color and ensuring representation of people of color at all levels of education decision making.

As a Mexican-American student, it has been hard to share experiences with educators as they can not relate to the same experiences that I've had, nor share the parts of my identity that are tied to my culture. It has been hard to explain the environment and the different social norms I grew up with. That was until a teacher assistant named Mr. Ramirez came to my school. He was the first Mexican-American teacher figure that I could finally speak to. He understood my jokes and the struggles that come from our shared background. It was refreshing for once not having to explain or change my ways, as he already understood. This is a relationship that is important to my educational experience and is vital for the success of many other students in the state of Oregon.

Every student deserves to see themselves in their own classroom, their own school, their own district, and also at the governmental agency that oversees their education: the Oregon Department of Education.

We applaud Colt Gill for his current hiring practices of trying to increase the diversity of ODE staff, but we are concerned that not every successive Director of ODE will hold the same priorities. This is why it is of utmost importance to pass this bill.

In closing, **vote YES on HB 4031**, because this bill is an essential step toward ensuring a more inclusive, equitable, and racially just education system for all of Oregon's students.

Sincerely,
Oregon Student Voice

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