



HB 2656: Elevate Student Voice Act

Letter of Support | February 6, 2023

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Wright and Hudson and members of the House Committee on Education-

My name is Ava Colleran, and I am a high school student in Portland, Oregon. I am also a member of [Oregon Student Voice](#), a student-led organization that empowers students to be authentic partners with K-12 decision makers.

I am writing on behalf of Oregon Student Voice in support of House Bill 2656. As a student, I support this bill because it would allow the experiences of students in schools to be better assessed. We must ensure that every school district across the state is utilizing tools such as the Student Educational Equity Survey and the Student Health Survey to better understand and support students. These surveys ask questions that help ODE and the state better target resources and support to where it's needed the most. Students learn best when they feel safe, healthy, and have a sense of belonging in their community. You cannot learn when your basic needs are not being met. Students should not be expected to learn when they are hungry, afraid, or sick.

These surveys also give insight into student mental health and learning conditions. They ask if students have access to important tools that help them connect with their teachers and whether they have access to a full-rounded education. Things such as art, music, and play are important to education. These surveys also question whether students have access to a trusted adult inside or outside of school. Having an adult students feel comfortable with and can rely on is immensely important to not only a student's education, but their development and overall well-being. These surveys give room for student voices to shine through and voice what is and is not working in schools, what could be improved, and overall student experiences in schools. The data from these surveys have similar privacy rules as other statewide assessments, so there is no concern that students could be identified from their responses. This may also help students be more open and honest in their reviews of their educational experiences if they know that their answers cannot be tracked back to them.

Oregon Student Voice urges you to vote yes on HB 2656 as it would help assess student experiences in schools and how they could be improved. It also elevates student voices and makes students an active partner in their own education.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ava Colleran

Oregon Student Voice