

Submitter: Niels Pasternak
On Behalf Of: Educational Equity Now
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB854

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Niels Pasternak (he/him). As a professional I work multiple jobs and have several roles. I serve as an autism consultant and SPED TOSA for Eugene 4J schools, I am the Executive Director for Educational Equity Now, the Chair of the Oregon Education Association Special Education Committee, an Equity Sparks Facilitator, an Adjunct Professor for Pacific University, an Educator Empowerment Coach, and a Coordinating Body member for the Regional Educator Network. I am also the father of two children of color currently navigating Eugene 4J schools. Thank you for scheduling a hearing and taking testimony for SB 854.

I strongly support Senate Bill 854 and consider it one of the greatest highlights of my career to work with Oregon Educators for Climate Education to advance the bill. I did not receive any climate change education as a K-12 student, and understand it as the greatest threat to existence and livelihood that our species, and countless others, have ever faced. Students across the globe, including diverse communities throughout our state, are demanding that schools take greater action. I agree and support them in this. Understanding the causes of climate change and the strategies for adaptation and mitigation that can happen (or are already happening) within the many regions that make-up Oregon is essential for communities to be resilient in the face of the monumental challenges that climate change is and will bring. K-12 schools are the appropriate venue for much of this learning to take place.

As you may already know, SB 854 is entirely written by educators and students. It is sponsored by the Oregon Education Association, following a ratification vote at the Representative Assembly where all local chapters were present. There is no room for confusion on where educators stand on the issue.

As I am sure you are aware, you have an incredible responsibility in your elected role. Generations of children and community outcomes can be positively affected by your stance on this bill. Oregon could become a shining example for states across the Union, and nations across the globe. As unique as our regions and their ecosystems are, we can develop highly applicable strategies for delivering place-based climate change education. Our state, its economy, and the well-being of its people all hang in the balance.

Respectfully,

Niels Pasternak
Eugene, Oregon