

Submitter: Rory Cowal  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB854

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of SB 854. My name is Rory Cowal and I'm an instructor at Portland State University. Many of the students who enroll in my undergraduate classes have just graduated from high school. Those students rely on their K-12 education to guide them through their university experience. The skills they have developed prior to attending college determine their ability to meet the demands of coursework, participate in the campus community, and tend to their own health and wellbeing.

When it comes to climate change, my students are in need of skills to help them confront this global crisis. Many are at a loss to know how to cope with it. During a recent class discussion, one student shared: "Climate change strikes such a fear in me that I generally just like to sweep it under the rug. This is something I'd like to work on, so I don't become all-consumed by it." Emotional health is a key factor in students' long term academic and life success. A comprehensive K-12 climate education would enable students to discuss and understand climate change, making it possible for them to feel less anxious and overwhelmed.

A comprehensive K-12 climate education would also provide a foundation for the growing number of students who wish to center climate change in their college studies. Oregon's universities are building innovative programs to train students how to meaningfully address climate change as researchers, artists, journalists, urban planners, architects, and engineers. K-12 students deserve a level of preparation that would allow them to hit the ground running in those programs. Indeed, the urgency of the climate crisis demands it.

Youth are inheriting this global emergency. They will have to adapt to climate change and are next in line to develop solutions. It's our duty to prepare them: our planet and future generations depend on it. I urge you to vote in favor of SB 854.

Thank you,  
Rory Cowal