

Thank you for this opportunity to state my support for Senate Bill 854. The issue of climate change is an existential one. Will we be able to continue to live on this beautiful planet? Not only do we need to consider this question from a global perspective, but also locally, in a way that we can grasp and care about. An interdisciplinary educational approach to looking at this issue will benefit young people and the state as a whole.

Senate Bill 854 would start this education at an early age. The science is indisputable and we are in a climate emergency. Already we have seen Oregon ravaged by wildfire, our forests struggling with insect infestations, and our rivers warming. Education on this issue should begin early in age appropriate ways. Children have a natural curiosity and love of nature. Educators need to take this openness and let young people develop a deeper connection to the land they live on. Let the classrooms and fieldtrips be places to discover and ask questions about the interdependent relationship of people and the natural world. This can and should happen in an integrated non-partisan manner.

My husband and I are both educators. He is currently teaching a class on the Science of Climate Change to University of Oregon students. The enrollment is always full and many of his students are concerned about their futures as it relates to the viability of the planet. Many of his students after taking his class want to become more engaged with the issue and figure out ways that they can be a positive agent of change. This to me is where I find hope.

We need to educate our young people to understand and care about this issue so that they will pursue careers in solar energy, energy efficiency and green science. Our community colleges need to train people for these jobs. Legislators need to take seriously that being responsible to their constituents means tackling this issue in a comprehensive way. We are all in this together and education is an important tool that we can use to move us forward through this crisis.

“I urge you to vote in favor of SB 854 - Comprehensive Climate Change Education in Oregon schools. It is time for Oregon to lead. Thank you for the opportunity to submit these remarks.

Sincerely,
Barbara Sklar, Eugene Oregon