

Submitter: Lise Colgan  
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 on SB 854. My name is Lise Colgan. I retired in 2021 from a career devoted to the wellbeing and integration of immigrants into our South Lane community of Cottage Grove. In retirement, I have become active in local, state and national work relating to climate change. I am passionate about doing something now so that my four grandchildren will still be able to see salmon in our rivers, take walks in the forests, and enjoy the beauties of our Earth home as I have had the good fortune to enjoy during my life.

But human beings do not value what they don't understand. Our children today need to understand the forces at work in the Earth's biosphere in order to protect it and to deal constructively with changes that are already baked into the planet's future. That is why I strongly support SB 854, which seeks to significantly expand and integrate climate change instruction across all K-12 core subject areas.

Children of all ages are experiencing anxiety about what their future on a climate-compromised planet will look like. They are not getting the information they need that will help them understand the forces at work and give them the tools for living in a world beset by natural disasters, pandemics, social unrest, supply shortages, and economic instability. Especially, they need to understand the linkages among all of these systems, which only a thoughtful, integrated curriculum can provide.

Instilling this integral understanding of the Earth and its systems in our youth should not wait until high school: elementary and intermediate school students are no less the victims of ignorance about how important the natural world's systems are to them than their older siblings. Their natural curiosity about how things work can be nurtured by quality curricula that provide experiential ways for them to explore, understand and appreciate their relationship with our amazing planet.

As a legislator, you have a unique opportunity and responsibility to assure that this essential learning is made part of K-12 curricula throughout Oregon. We require students in our state to learn about American history, the Holocaust, and how to do basic math. Surely learning about the climate that supports every facet of our lives is equally important!

To foster well-informed, prepared, and emotionally resilient students who can face the new uncertainties that a changing climate is already creating, I urge you to vote in

favor of SB 854 Comprehensive Climate Change Education in Oregon Schools.

Thank you in advance for your support of SB 854. Oregon was an early innovator in legislation to require recycling of soft drink containers and protect agricultural and forest lands. It is time it to exercise this same spirit of innovative leadership by legislating comprehensive climate education.

Sincerely,

LISE A. COLGAN

Member, Elders Climate Action Oregon Chapter; Elders Action Network; Climate Action Cottage Grove