

Submitter: Kathryn Mills
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 Kathryn Mills, and I am an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Oregon and a parent of two young children. I primarily teach Developmental Psychology in my role as an instructor, and have a decade of experience researching the unique needs and strengths of the adolescent developmental period.

I strongly support SB 854, which seeks to significantly expand and integrate climate change instruction across all K-12 core subject areas (language arts, sciences, mathematics, social studies, health, physical education and the arts). This bill does more than increase children and adolescents understanding of climate change, it will equip them with the needed information to confront the most pressing challenges they will experience in their lifetime.

I support this bill because children and adolescents are clamoring for more knowledge about climate change, and waiting until college to educate them about climate change is too late. We have a duty to provide children and adolescents with information about how the climate is changing, how to process this reality, and what they can do to combat a climate catastrophe, to help them effectively learn and navigate the world around them. By kindergarten, children are already able to understand the concept of the world/environment and are developing a sense of their place within it. Children function better when adults provide structured supportive learning environments to help them process and engage with events around them, as opposed to avoiding these discussions out of concern that they are too complex or too upsetting for a child. Adolescence is a time of increasing cognitive capacities—which includes long-term thinking and goal setting—and heightened social sensitivity, which together can increase adolescents need for understanding and responding to how climate change is impacting their present and future. Adolescents also have a fundamental need to contribute to social systems that impact them, which is why education on how to meaningfully respond to the negative impacts of climate change is essential for adolescent health and development.

This is our opportunity to be one of the leading states in the nation by adopting climate change instruction across all K-12 core subject areas. Children and adolescents want to learn about how they can make an impact on their community and shape their future. By including educational instruction on climate change, we can help mitigate the distress that comes with a disconnection from one's ability to

understand and impact the world around us.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB 854 - Comprehensive Climate Change Education in Oregon schools. I believe voting in favor of this will aligns with your oath to uphold the Oregon Constitution, which states that you must act to address threats facing the state and the livelihoods of its people.

Thank you for your support of SB 854! It is time for Oregon to take leadership in becoming the second state to legislate comprehensive climate education.

Sincerely,
Kathryn Mills, PhD
Eugene, OR