

Submitter: Gabriel Burke  
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 Gabriel Burke, and I am here as a student at Churchill High School, a member of the Churchill Climate Action Club, the 4j Climate Justice Team and a resident of Eugene, Oregon. I strongly support SB 854 - which seeks to significantly expand and integrate climate change instruction across all K-12 core subject areas.

I'm here today because I have never been taught anything about climate change through school. Everything I learned about climate change, a systemic issue that will disproportionately affect people of my generation, I learned outside of school. I was extremely lucky to be born into a family of people that are aware of climate change and of climate activists. My grandfather worked with James Hanson to sound the alarm about climate change decades ago, and yet they were ignored. Nevertheless I am still extremely proud of them and everyone in my family who acknowledges climate change. However, I understand that there are people that aren't as lucky as I am, that don't have supportive families who accept climate change, and if this bill doesn't pass, they may not be aware of climate change until it's too late.

I am submitting written testimony because I am concerned I will not be able to testify in-person. I am willing to travel over 60 miles up to Salem from Eugene in order to testify and in order to do that I have to miss a day of school right as finals are coming up, all so my voice can still possibly go unheard. I don't believe I should have to give up a day of school to make my voice heard at all, and possibly have it go unheard. I know personally I, and I believe many of my peers feel ignored and discredited by older generations when we try to make our voices heard on climate change. I need all of you to make this a safe topic to be discussed in school, to make schools a safe environment for these types of discussions, and to help encourage the next generation to fight for their future, without that I sincerely do not know if my generation and/or the generations afterward will survive.

Honestly, I'm submitting testimony because I am enraged that we have let climate change get this far and that there has been so much inaction from previous generations, who most likely won't have to suffer the consequences of their actions. I am livid that there are people so greedy that they will do anything to protect their profits and their reputations, even if it means destroying the futures of billions of people. I urge you to pass this bill for the sake of everyone in my generation and future generations. I live in South Eugene near forests, streams and trails and I go on walks with my friend every week. Every time I go outside and look at the trees I think "in 100 years, are we going to have to teach our children what trees are because there aren't any left?" It's a thought that horrifies me. I am utterly appalled when I think about it. I couldn't tell you where this story originated, but it goes like this: The

entire world has been completely urbanized. Virtually all land has cities on it and no trees. Except for one, tiny, 1 mile by 1 mile square, that contains trees and forests. You can lottery in to possibly spend 1 week of your life in the forest. As someone who walks in forests every week, and spends time with trees every day, I hate this idea. I couldn't imagine what it would possibly be like without trees.

I urge you to pass this bill because I love our planet. I believe it is the moral duty of older generations to educate younger generations, especially on issues that will directly and disproportionately affect them. My generation needs to learn about climate change from a young age, for our survival. We cannot survive unless we educate and empower young people. Thank you for hearing my testimony and my voice, and for letting me share my story, sincerely, your constituent, Gabriel Burke.