

Hello committee members and thank you for the opportunity to provide a testimony for Senate Bill 854. My name is Aayush Neil Surya, I used he/him pronouns, and I am a senior at Westview High School in Portland. I am highly involved in performing arts, leading the tenor/bass a cappella group Y-Chromatones and the choir's bass section in school, and I am a member of the cast of Oregon's United States of Frozen. I also often try to help my community in areas where I can uniquely be helpful, such as technology organizations like Free Geek where I can employ my knowledge to promote sustainability.

Despite growing up in an education system that *did* focus on climate change, I was never taught how directly it can impact our lives until the wildfires hit during the pandemic. We always learned about the effects of climate change at a macro scale, impacting entire ecosystems and endangering animals we've never personally seen. On the other hand, aside from myself, every other member of my immediate family has asthma, and my dad is uniquely susceptible. The wildfires put my dad in mortal danger and similar events consistently create a worry for my family that we shouldn't need to go through. I will never forget when my dad was rushed to the emergency room because of a few fireworks. Every little effect can have a major impact on our everyday lives and are often overlooked in education in favor of the safety of far-off victims.

Learning about the personal effects of climate change on each of us is a necessity to create change in the long run and promote public safety. Not only is it our responsibility to promote education on how climate change affects the world as a whole, it is also our responsibility to take control of our own lives and promote a better future for our families and personal communities. Lawmakers like yourselves bear a critical role in society to enact change on behalf of those of us who seek to support those we love, and you have the power to promote a society that you can be proud of. As stated, I was educated about climate change, but didn't realize how close it hit to home in my actual life. Change is needed in how we approach the effects of climate change, so we can continue a pattern of consistent education and make it more effective.

Kind regards,

Aayush Neil Surya (he/him), Senior at Westview High School