

Submitter: Mel Bankoff
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB854

Dear Senator Dembrow and the Education Committee

My name is Mel Bankoff, Executive Director for Partners for Sustainable Schools. We have been working with youth in the public schools in Lane County for the last 15 years. We teach environmental stewardship through the understanding of how all the living systems (water, air, soil, fauna and flora) are interconnected therefore how we take care of those systems ultimately determines the health and well being of all living systems.

The beginning of the Industrial Age to our present time we have externalized the impacts of our development leaving our eco-system in an extremely dangerous and uncertain place. Our present world is experiencing these changes as climate change accelerates at a rapid pace. We see these changes through extreme weather systems, massive fires, draughts, flooding, melting glaciers, massive agricultural challenges, etc, etc,

These impacts of climate changes also disproportionately affecting the poor and minorities both in the U.S. and throughout the world especially in third world counties. The travesty is that those with the least wealth are feeling it the most and contributing to climate change the least. Climate change exposes a deep issue of racial injustice and inequity.

Our generation and our children are presently feelings the impacts of these major shifts in our weather patterns from climate change. The changes are increasing both in their frequency and intensity over the last decade at a pace far greater than predicted. When psychologists speak of climate anxiety in our youth they see many of our children experiencing a since of futility, anxiety and depression when they think of their future.

Our educational system plays a critical role in its need to be informing our next generation about the science, economics, sociological, and emotional impacts of climate change. It should start and function through k-12 education in creating earths stewards with respect and honoring the gifts that our natural world gives us at a young age. As conscientious and concerned adults we need to do all in our power to address climate change. It is our responsibility to educate our youth so they informed to make the best decisions from an early age in being aware of our human footprint and its impact on our environment. As the leading systems thinker in the world Peter Singer of M.I.T. would say everything we do is interconnected. Therefore how we

treat our eco-system is how our eco-system will treat us.

We need to act with intelligence, commitment, and dedication to do everything in our power to create a safe and viable world for our next generation. We only have one earth that is moving more and more into crises every day, week, month and year. Our youth will be our next leaders and that is why I fully support Senate Bill 854, because education plays a major role in creating an informed public that will hopefully make the best decisions in addressing the many challenges our world currently faces.

Thank you for your time Mel Bankoff