

Hello Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony on Senate Bill 854. My name is Janani Maheswaran and I am a senior at Westview High School. I am also an Oregon fellow at Our Climate, the president of my school's NHS club, and a teacher of STEAM education.

Everyone has a unique climate story, so I would like to share a little about mine. Growing up in Oregon, my family and I frequently took trips to Cannon beach, hiked around waterfalls, and camped in the wilderness. Through these experiences, I have not only bonded with my family, but connected with my environment. I have grown to love the trees, animals, and ecosystems that inhabit Earth alongside me. In 2020, Oregon was hit by a multitude of wildfires. While the air was too polluted to take my daily quarantine walk, residents in other cities were evacuated, with their homes reduced to ashes. I knew immediately that this is not a reality that I could live in, and certainly not one I am willing to let upcoming generations experience. By investing in climate education for K-12 students, we can take a massive step towards preserving our planet for its current and future inhabitants.

Climate education is crucial in order to cultivate awareness and stir action amongst the generation that is most impacted by climate change: youth. The implementation of SB 854 ensures that students gain essential knowledge encompassing climate justice, sustainability practices, and "green" career pathways. Through personal experience, I have learned that access to this information can be life-changing. Many of my classmates in Environmental Science have decided to pursue jobs in ecological conservation or the clean energy industry after learning about these topics. From simply accessing educational YouTube videos on composting, I have been able to introduce composting into my family's daily lifestyle. Climate education is just the beginning, but it is a critical stepping stone for the long journey ahead to combat climate change. Your support on this bill is vital in ensuring that upcoming generations are suitably equipped with the resources and knowledge they need to survive in this world. I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of SB 854 and I would like to leave you with a quote by Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,
Janani Maheswaran