

Submitter: Ryan Carey  
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 Ryan Carey, and I'm a student at South Eugene High School in Eugene, Oregon. I'm a member of the climate club at SEHS and have experience volunteering in environmental conservation related activities (tree plantings, native species removal, and the like). SB 854 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). I strongly support this and urge you to vote in favor of it, for reasons outlined below.

First of all, it would help young people like me understand climate change better, which is one of the most pressing issues of our time. Scientists agree that unless we do something drastic, we will make our world inhabitable in the near future. They agree that it is a huge threat to the safety of my generation, of the young people in Oregon today. So shouldn't we have the right to learn about climate change? Shouldn't we learn how it is threatening our future?

Take Oregon, for example. I know that I am personally affected by the yearly wildfires that sweep through our mountains every August. I still remember the Holiday Farm fire, when I couldn't go outside because of smoke and almost got evacuated from my home. And climate change directly contributed to that. Climate change caused by the actions of humans, by the actions of people like us. That's what science is telling us.

Now I know that some of you are thinking. Isn't climate change already taught in science classes? Why does it need to be taught more? Well, here's why. Climate change isn't only a scientific issue. It's a social issue, it's an issue about my future. Every aspect of my future. Take those wildfires for instance. The social impacts of that were way bigger than the scientific ones. All the people who got evacuated, all the people whose homes got destroyed, all the cherished hikes and trails gone. Erased. But climate change as it is taught in science class wouldn't address that. It would only talk about the science behind the fire, or more likely not even talk about the fire at all. It wouldn't even talk about something that literally destroyed entire communities of people's livelihoods. But if climate change was actually taught in social studies, for instance, then we would actually learn about all the people whose lives were destroyed by the fire and how we can help them. We would learn about the impact it had on the communities of the McKenzie River. And that's just one example of how this bill could help us.

Or what about the math of climate change, what about the statistics behind how much we have to cut our emissions by? What about the history of climate change throughout time, how people have been tirelessly advocating for the reduction of emissions since they started? Shouldn't we be learning about that in schools? But that's not what's being taught in science classes. They only focus on the science of this issue, they ignore every other aspect. And that's where this bill would help. This bill would require ALL students to learn about ALL these things, to learn about one of the most concerning issues for ALL of us.

So I urge you to support the passing of SB 854 to create comprehensive Climate Change education in Oregon schools. Education that would help my generation better learn and prepare for the upcoming future. And I thank you for your support in getting this bill this far, but it is now time to take the next step. It is time for Oregon to become a leader in legislated comprehensive climate change education.

Sincerely,  
Ryan Carey  
SEHS Junior  
Climate club member