

Submitter: Breck Foster  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB 854

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for SB 854. My name is Breck Foster and I am a member of the OECE Steering Committee. I live in Lake Oswego and teach social studies and Spanish at LO High. For the past five years I have worked with Green Team students, two of whom are my own children, staff, district and community partners, to make our school and by extension our community and world, more sustainable. My students have developed skills like those outlined in the SB 854 learning concept that encourages studying the means to address “climate and stewardship through active civic participation and decision-making” as well as listening to diverse perspectives. While LOSD did answer students’ call to action in 2022 by adding a “Teaching and Practicing Sustainability” goal on its strategic plan, only a few districts are taking such an approach, and it is not enough. That is why SB 854 is so important.

Increasingly, success in the workforce requires interdisciplinary skill sets and systems-thinking. Nurturing students’ sense of connectedness and interdependence with natural systems and with people from across the state and around the world can make the rest of learning feel more connected, relevant, and applicable. SB 854 was formed with a similar sentiment in mind, as described in the learning concept that states an obligation to “help students gain insight into the importance of the protection of international human rights for all people in regards to climate,...natural resources, ecosystems, biodiversity, sustainability”.

I have learned in the past six years to integrate climate change issues into my classes, such as using the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a roadmap for how to build the community, state and world we want to live in. We study changemakers focused on solutions and innovations. If I can move in this direction, I am confident others can as well. Teachers are also natural students. With the right support, through professional development and curricular resources, we can get the tools we need to do this work effectively. We can provide students with a stronger basis for building resilient and collaborative communities. Thank you.