

March 19, 2025

Chair Courtney Neron

Vice-Chair Emily McIntire

Vice-Chair April Dobson Members of the House Education Committee

RE: HB 2007 – Relating to summer learning; declaring an emergency

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chair McIntire, Vice-Chair Dobson, and members of the House Education Committee.

My name is Alejandra Villanueva, and I am a Youth Advocate for the Chicas program at Adelante Mujeres. Adelante Mujeres serves hundreds of Latina youth in the Forest Grove, Hillsboro, and Beaverton school districts. I not only serve my community, but I also come from being a student at Forest Grove High School, where I was once a recipient of the help and support provided by the Chicas after-school program. It is an honor to now give back to the community and support Latina teens, just as I was once supported.

On behalf of the Latina youth and families we serve, I am here today to urge you to oppose HB 2007.

As currently written, HB 2007 is insufficient in providing the holistic support that our youth in Oregon need. High-quality, effective learning programs combine both academics and enrichment, while HB 2007 focuses solely on summer learning tied to literacy. This approach does not fully address the diverse needs of our children. By concentrating solely on summer learning related to literacy, HB 2007 overlooks the importance of a holistic and developmentally appropriate approach that is necessary for helping our youth reach their academic goals.

Our Chicas program, like many others, needs sustained support to be there for the youth who turn to these programs as a valuable resource. Many of the youth in our program rely on our resources to access food they may not have at home after school. Additionally, many of these students ask for designated homework time because they do not feel comfortable asking their own teachers for help. They feel supported and understood through our program.

Like me, many participants seek out the Chicas program as a place to feel safe, supported, and motivated to excel in school and pursue higher education. Our program has had a significant impact, with many Latina youth going on to attend universities and becoming professionals. Some even return to our program to give back to the community, just as I have.

While school plays an important role in a student's education, programs like ours serve as the foundation that helps fill the gaps. Our program provides more than just academic help—it offers a safe, nurturing environment where students can find support and strength during difficult times. Many of the youth we serve turn to us not only for academic assistance but also for a sense of belonging and community. The positive impact our program has had on countless lives has shaped it into what it is today. However, without adequate support, we risk losing the ability to continue changing the lives of future generations who depend on us for guidance, hope, and opportunities.

Today, we urge you to honor the commitment made last year to provide more comprehensive support for our youth in Oregon. This support should not only focus on summer learning but also highlight the critical role of afterschool and summer programs in ensuring students' success. The Latina youth we serve are the future of our community, and by failing to support programs like Chicas, we are neglecting the very foundation of that future.