

Dear Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Good afternoon. My name is Liz Fouter-Branch, and I am a retired educator from Portland. I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions (Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs; Oregon Commission on Black Affairs; and the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs) in strong support for Senate Bill 1538.

Senate bill 1538 affirms that every student in Oregon – regardless of their documentation or immigration status – has the right to a free and public education. As an educator, I believe deeply that public education should be accessible to all children who call Oregon home. Learning should never depend on where a child was born or what paperwork their family does or does not have.

Opponents of this bill often argue that taxpayers should not be responsible for educating immigrant or refugee populations. But the facts tell a very different story. According to the American Immigration Council, documented and undocumented individuals nationwide paid about \$100 billion in federal, state, and local taxes in 2022 alone. Here in Oregon, those cleared to work contributed roughly \$5.6 billion in state and local taxes that same year. These families are already helping support the very systems that make our communities strong – including our public schools.

Throughout my career, I've seen how misinformation and prejudice can limit opportunities for young people who simply want to learn and thrive. SB 1538 would take an important step forward by codifying immigration status as a protected class under Oregon's anti-discrimination laws for schools. This legislation ensures that our classrooms remain places of inclusion, safety, and opportunity for every student.

Education is a cornerstone of democracy. When we invest in all our children, we invest in the future of Oregon. Thank you for your time, your service, and your attention to this important issue. I respectfully urge your support for Senate Bill 1538.



Liz Fouter-Branch

Commissioner, Oregon Commission on Black Affairs
Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs

