

March 15, 2017

Honorable Margaret Doherty, Chair
House Education Committee
Oregon State Capitol



Re: HB 2845 Ethnic Studies Standards

Dear Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Chalkboard Project, I am writing to urge your support of HB 2845 to establish statewide Ethnic Studies standards within existing Social Studies standards for Oregon's K-12 students.

Chalkboard Project is focused on educational equity and working towards ensuring all Oregon students have equitable opportunity and access to educational attainment. We are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion of all people, and believe everyone should be equally valued and respected. The objectives of HB 2845 align with these values. We particularly appreciate the inclusion of women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender in the Bill's broad definition of Ethnic Studies.

Central to our efforts toward improving education outcomes for Oregon's students is the use of evidence-based practices to affect system-level changes. A recent study of the implementation of Ethnic Studies curriculum in the San Francisco School District found significant increases in the grade point averages and attendance rates of students who were assigned to Ethnic Studies courses compared to students who were not. This is the first causal evidence of the impacts of Ethnic Studies on student outcomes and it is very promising.

We believe that the best policies aim to shape the contexts within which practical solutions to problems can succeed. By embedding Ethnic Studies standards into existing Social Studies standards, HB 2845 would establish a strong foundation upon which Oregon can build the culturally responsive curriculum needed to increase student engagement, attendance rates, and graduation rates.

The passage of HB 2845 would once again put Oregon at the forefront of education innovation. Ethnic Studies benefits all students, it creates relevant and rigorous learning environments, improves knowledge of different racial and cultural groups, promotes diversity and inclusion, and prepares students to successfully participate in a global economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corrine Oishi", is written over a white background.

Corrine Oishi, Chair
Board of Directors
Chalkboard Project