



SB 12: Inclusive Schools Pilot Program

Letter of Support | February 11, 2019

To Chair Roblan, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and the members of the Senate Committee on Education:

My name is Jared Cetz and I am the executive director of [Oregon Student Voice \(OSV\)](#), a student-led organization that empowers students to be authentic partners with K-12 education decision makers. I am a junior at David Douglas High School in Portland, Oregon. I am writing on behalf of OSV to give the student perspective on Senate Bill 12. Currently, we are in support of Senate Bill 12 with the amendments proposed by the Oregon Department of Education. This bill requires the creation of an Oregon Student Policy Advisory Network. This bill is extremely powerful because it directly impacts the state of student voice in Oregon. In the following, I share my perspective, as a student.

We, students, recognize the state's intent and are excited to see the state taking steps toward systematically integrating student voice into decision making. Students are one of the largest stakeholders in education and are aware of the opportunities and challenges within their environments, possess innovative ideas for positive reform, and desire to advocate for changes. However, students have limited opportunities to participate in decision making. Research shows that when students are involved to participate in decision making, they have decreased dropout rates, increased academic performance, and greater engagement in their school and community.¹ Additionally, researchers find that policies created from student participation are more likely to lead to positive reforms for all students.² Therefore, we are happy the state sees student voice, especially how we view student voice, as valuable and important. Further, we are excited that the state is creating a survey, with the support of students, in order to gain a deeper level of understanding into student experiences. This data will be invaluable for improving our K-12 education system to better meet the needs of students.

While we are supportive of Senate Bill 12, we also want to share our concerns and initial advice for implementation of the Oregon Student Policy Advisory Network. We are concerned that the network may result in the tokenization and inauthentic representation of student voice if it is implemented without the advice of students. Therefore, we hope that the state includes students in the design and role out of the network. Students are frequently invited to the decision making process without consideration of their needs, feelings, and experiences. Students are expected to fit into a system designed and run by decision makers, who hold well meaning intention, but often tokenize student experiences. During design and implementation, adults need to step back and place students at the forefront where they can provide essential feedback for creating a network that can work for students in

¹ Mitra, D.L. (2008). *Student voice in school reform: Building youth-adult partnerships that strengthen schools and empower youth*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

² Mager, U., & Nowak, P. (2012). Effects of student participation in decision making at school. A systematic review and synthesis of empirical research. *Educational Research Review*, 7(1), 38-61.

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today's school system. Not only will this network be more effective in meeting student needs, it will also help ensure that students are able to authentically share their voice and will limit tokenization.

I, as well as the members of Oregon Student Voice, believe that Senate Bill 12 with the amendments proposed by the Oregon Department of Education has the potential to improve student involvement in decision making. We believe that the Oregon Department of Education, under the leadership of Deputy Superintendent Colt Gill, has every intention of authentically including students in the design and implementation of the Oregon Student Policy Advisory Network and, therefore, will protect students against tokenization. We hope that this bill will bring us closer to normalized authentic student voice. We hope that the Senate Committee on Education approves Senate Bill 12.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jared Cetz
Executive Director
Oregon Student Voice