



Joint Committee on Student Success  
Invited Testimony  
April 2, 2019, at 5pm in Hearing Room F

Co-Chairs Roblan and Smith Warner, Co-Vice-Chairs Knopp and Smith, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss investments that the OCFW and its sister commissions consider essential for student success. African American students are not achieving the kinds of success we would hope to see, given the current types and levels of investment for students of color. I will be talking to you today about the overall view of the OCFW around Title IX, restorative justice, equity and civil rights within schools, and where investment can make the most difference. I would like to share with you that the Advocacy Commissions are encouraged and at the same time concerned, that the JCSS consider this first significant investment in Title IX to be the beginning of a larger commitment to social justice within schools. Investment will be needed at every level. Districts will need to train staff and, with ODE, help parents and students understand where and how to file a complaint, and what to expect regarding the investigation and the outcome.

It is essential to use an Equity Lens to understand the importance of racially-informed and trauma-informed approaches in the school social and educational environments. Title IX will provide a framework for the voice and concerns of those most affected to seek resolution and redress. My own experience, and that of the Commissions, lead us to believe that racialized stress, battle fatigue, and daily micro aggressions feed much of what Title IX can address regarding the harassment, bullying, name calling and other forms of toxic behavior that lead to despair, unnecessary stressor's that African Americans teachers and students encounter everyday along with the unacceptable graduation rates that Oregon must address.

Additionally, investments in recruiting and retaining diversity among teachers and administrators, both racially, culturally, and within LGBTQI+ communities must also be part of the solution. The preparation and ongoing professional development of Oregon educators to become more successful in multi-cultural classrooms is at the heart of many longstanding issues. This includes academic performance, test scores, dropout rates, discipline rates, college entry levels, etc. The JCSS and the 2019 Legislature must provide investment, strategy, and regular measures to address the critical need for competent, meaningful preparation of teachers and administrators in cultural proficiency, and culturally relevant and meaningful curriculum. I cannot stress enough what an uphill battle this is for Oregon, with its long, un-inclusive, and deeply racist history. We continue to have enormous gaps between the race/culture of staff and the race/culture of our students. It gets worse, not better, every year. The Commission's own

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research indicates that there is evidence that preparing teachers with these skills can have a positive impact on outcomes. With good thought, best practice, and wise investment, we can make a difference in this area and the Advocacy Commissions stand ready to support you and this critical work in any way.

We have a great need for recruiting and retaining more teachers with cultural and linguistic skills to be successful with Oregon's diverse students. Communication with African American teachers, students and their families continue to be a critical problem, and a barrier to their success. which I wish to now address as part of my remarks, as well as the toxic environment that challenge black teachers and students every day....

- *Micro aggression that occur when you are shopping at the grocery store*
- *Micro aggressions – when dropping clothes off at the cleaners*
- *The assumption that you don't know what your talking about, and when it becomes clear the individual you are dealing with has made a mistake, or in error their inability to admit they are wrong.*
- *Not seeing people who look like you are teaching classes in schools.*
- *Not having other AA teachers in your building who look like you (Being the only)*
- *Hearing comments like "is Kwanza a really holiday?" What is Kwanza, is that a real word?"*

These stressors are tiresome for adults but when students experience them the effects are even more devastating. Creating an inability to focus in class, acting out, not wanting to eat from being body shamed, low academic achievement, and eventually in some cases dropping out of school. We are at a critical point in our work as commissioners. We must call out those places that are continuing to fail our students of color and demand immediate change. Our students do not have time to wait for the adults to get it together. Young impressionable minds are at stake.

Thank you again for inviting the Advocacy Commissions to address areas of investment with the Joint Committee on Student Success.



Helen Richardson