

Good afternoon,

My name is Paul Hawkins, a resident of Portland, Oregon and I support SB 683.

Born in Washington D.C. and raised in suburban Maryland, I readily acknowledge and can attest to the many advantages of middle class white privilege. However, one of my greatest blessings was to attend some of the most diverse public schools in the United States. While the school curriculum often ignored, avoided, or misrepresented the history of racism in the United States, I learned valuable life lessons from the varying races, ethnicities, languages, and socioeconomic status of my peers. More than any teacher or administrator, my peers educated me on the harsh truths and injustices perpetuated for centuries in the United States, particular against black communities. My peers equipped me to identify racist language, discriminatory practices, and oppressive societal constructs. This anti-racist skillset is the most valuable thing I learned in school, far more powerful, useful, and relevant than any grammar or chemistry lesson. Plainly, the school curriculum failed. By failing to teach students to combat racism, the curriculum leaves to chance the dangerous influences that breed white supremacy. Overcoming racism is too important to continue to leave to chance. I strongly support enacting SB 683 to make anti-racist curriculum mandatory in the State of Oregon. I urge the Senate Committee on Education to lead on this issue. Now more than ever, public opinion and elected officials finally support racial justice. Building a better, safer future for all depends upon teaching, learning, and confronting our racist history. Now is the time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.