

March 8, 2021

Chair Senator Dembrow, Vice-Chair Senator Thompson, and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Danita Harris, I am a graduate of the Oregon K-12 system, a Western Oregon University graduate, and a small business owner focusing on DE&I, political education, and electoral work in Oregon. I am writing in favor of SB 683.

Oregon is not immune from racist teachings, historical inaccuracies, and policies. Shying away from the history, the pain and the complications of our past will not erase it.

Without being taught the actual history of our state as a part of our K-12 education, we fail our students. The perpetuation of a false narrative with inaccurate portrayals of our history leaves our community members without the knowledge or the skills necessary to hold hard truths and seek to create a better future.

We see complicated histories taught in other spaces throughout the US, including Tulsa Ok., facing the Tulsa Race Massacre. Indeed, if Oklahoma can face that piece of history, we can implement measures to face our own.

Folks from dominant culture have claimed that bringing in a multifaceted educational component to the classroom to uplift historical accuracy and feature cultural competence will unfairly harm some students over others, specifically white students over BIPOC students.

As a Black WomXn who has had this experience, I can thoughtfully and honestly say our current model negates many of our students and their families' lives. This practice has proven to erase the contributions made to Oregon by BIPOC communities despite the real and pervasive systemic challenges that BIPOC communities have historically faced.

SB 683 provides Oregon students an opportunity to learn about our state's complex history through a historical context that does not avoid our challenging past but celebrates our history with honesty, which is a real honoring of our State and our past.

Thank you,

Danita Harris
Citrine Solutions