

I write this letter in support of SB 863.

I am Black. I have lived and worked in Oregon for ten years.

In my role as the Director of Equity (Diversity and Inclusion) at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon, I have witnessed the direct harm Black students and other students of color have endured due to the absence of awareness and basic knowledge of our shared histories in Oregon and the United States. Specifically, Black students have been called n\*\*\*\*r, have sat in classrooms where the discussion of Black people have been harmful due to inaccurate and false representations, racist characterizations in curriculum, and the absence of internal resources to address the systemic issues.

At the request of parents in Ashland schools, I have sat in the office of principals, teachers, administrators, and community forums in an attempt to repair the injury of Black students that have been harmed in their care. These interactions have occurred at the primary, middle, and high school levels. In each case, there was an absence of awareness, curriculum, and educational methodology that existed inside of the institution. It is apparent that in order to provide the comprehensive shift that is needed to ensure that all students receive the education necessary to be successful citizens in the 21st century, it will require a leadership mandate and the technical and financial resources to develop and disseminate fact-based curriculum that includes our shared histories.

We are in a historic time. The world has witnessed a global uprising demanding attention for the importance and urgency to value Black lives. It is not possible to realize this promise if we are not preparing the world's future leaders in a manner that does not replicate the conditions that require the current outcries. You can not expect an antiracist society to emerge from the ashes if you do not first teach the future stewards of society what the roots, causes and effects of racism are. It must be accurately defined, by professionals, who are subject matter experts, so the innovative minds of young people can contribute to its eradication. Now is the time.