

Dear Senate Committee on Education,

I strongly urge you to pass SB 683. I support this bill for several reasons.

First, the bill recognizes the flaw in our nation's education system which teaches US history from the perspective of the oppressor. The exclusion and manipulation of Black, Indigenous, and people of color history in our schools' curriculums is inherently racist and needs to be addressed. SB 683 is a great start.

Second, teaching our youth the truth about racism in US and Oregon's history is an indispensable step towards social justice. Lack of education of our nation's real history in schools plays a major role in perpetuating a racist culture. This bill allows us to tackle racism and systemic issues at the root. This will in turn facilitate teacher monitored discussion between opposing views and help build more empathy, understanding and community collaboration.

The best evidence displaying our dire need for improvements to our education system and history curriculum, in my opinion, is the alarming amount of opposition to this bill. If our racist history was taught beginning in grade school, the public would not have the misconception that what is currently being taught is accurate and unbiased. I used to also take for granted the little I was taught about racism in grade school and felt it was enough. Unfortunately, it took me going to law school to fully grasp just how prevalent racism was to our nation's history & law, and why it still is today. With my education, I have been able to recognize my own implicit biases and am actively educating those around me and working to become a better advocate for minorities. Higher education, however, is a privilege not many get to enjoy. Limiting access to this level of education is a social justice issue which this bill can help solve.

Teaching children the truth about our history will not only benefit our youth, it will also help improve our economy and businesses in general. With this new curriculum, Oregon will once again lead by example in policy to show the rest of the nation the many benefits of addressing our racist history with transparency. This bill will help raise new generations that do not have to seek further education in their adult life to understand just how deeply rooted racism is in our nation's history and why we are where we are in today's social climate. With this, we can avoid having to unteach false history, fund diversity and inclusion trainings, and continue perpetuating a false narrative of white saviorism.

Lastly, I want to draw a comparison with how the US and States currently handle their history of oppression to how Germany addresses their history with the Holocaust. Although cliché, it is worth noting that history repeats itself all too often, because it is forgotten. Germany does not try to hide their history and does not see teaching and highlighting their history as traumatizing or unfair to any group. The whole point of teaching what happened to get us to where we are now, is to develop a better foundation of understanding and appreciation for how far we have come and how much work still needs to be done. As opposed, our current school curriculum teaches our youth to be blindly patriotic without seeking improvements, so much so that people truly believe racism ended when slavery was abolished. With that said, I truly hope you will allow this bill to move forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Lina Rodriguez