

Isabela Villarreal
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RE: Support SB 702

March 10, 2021



Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

For the record my name is Isabela Villarreal, I use she/her pronouns, and I am the Policy and Communications Manager at Next Up Action Fund, formerly known as the Bus Project. Our mission is to build political power with diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. As an organization that builds political power and strong, effective leadership pipelines for diverse young people we strongly support SB 702 which will create a task force that will review social studies standards with key stakeholders.

We envision young people boldly leading the state forward, our democracy being inclusive and accessible, and communities that are strong and resilient. In order for this vision to become a reality, a key aspect is ensuring that young people are equipped with the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be able to address issues in their community. Schools can, and should, play a key role in ensuring that all young people have access to the information and skill-building they need to be engaged and informed participants in our democracy.

In June 2020 Next Up Action Fund hosted 7 focus groups to hear firsthand about people's perspectives and experiences with civics education in Oregon. This group of 40 people included current high school students, recent high school graduates (who finished within the last 1-3 years), and high school teachers from 24 different high schools across Oregon. While there was not a singular solution that emerged from discussions, it was extremely clear that a vast majority of participants strongly agreed that civics education is a vital and necessary piece of education and a key piece in addressing inequities in our education system. It was clear that not all participants were receiving the same information or quality of instruction, but all desired to learn how to be active participants in their communities.

One way we can help address this need is by making sure that many stakeholders are involved in the process of shaping our education standards. SB 702 would require that the task force involves a current student, a recent graduate, a teacher, a culturally specific organization, a voting rights organization, community members, and other key stakeholders to review Social Studies Standards to ensure that the educational system is responsive and addressing the needs and ambitions of 21st-century learners.

It's important to equip young people with the skills, dispositions, and knowledge they need to be civically engaged, yet too many students are not receiving this information. Please pass SB 702 so that there is an opportunity for more stakeholders to have a purposeful review of social studies standards and address any existing gaps of learning.

Thank you,

Isabela Villarreal
Policy and Communications Manager