

Emily Phuong Tran

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House Education Committee

RE: Support on HB 3363

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Emily Phuong Tran. I'm a junior at Tualatin High School. I immigrated to Oregon six years ago from Vietnam. I strongly support HB 3363.

Despite many knowing about my living in Vietnam for eleven years, I rarely have a conversation come up when I am asked or talk about this part of my life. I struggle to find the words to explain its context. Once, a student asked me if I drove from Vietnam to the United States. (I'm not sure how one can drive through the Pacific Ocean.) If my peers cannot point to Vietnam on a map—a country which has an extensive relationship with the United States, I might add—how can they ever understand my experiences as an immigrant? How can I ever belong to a community which cannot understand my culture and upbringing?

The disparities in our education have real-life impacts on our underserved communities. Elementary students who speak another language at home are taken out of recess to attend their English Language Development classes, leading to their exclusion from classmates and a sense of guilt for speaking another language. Their first language deteriorates or they forget it altogether, essentially being punished for their bilingualism. This is a story my friends of color tell me often, jealous that I was able to retain my language, but even I must admit, my Vietnamese has not been the same.

Lived experiences like these have always existed in our education system. The problems of the past, of the times when our administrators were students, often still exist today, but may not take the same form. We need people who have gone through the problem to solve the problem. Surely, students of a different background than Vietnamese cannot solve an issue of Vietnamese students. Our students want a better experience, they want to feel seen and heard, they are ready to help tackle these problems and find a solution. A racial equity and justice council does just that. I support HB 3363 and I hope that you do the same.

Thank you for your time.