

Good afternoon, Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the House Education Committee. My name is Catherine Phipps and I'm a student from Tualatin High School, a public high school in the Portland Metro Area. I'm supportive of HB 3363 because amplifying underrepresented voices will improve the educational experience of all students and better prepare students for life.

In my English class this year, we read Shakespeare's "Othello." We watched a movie of the play where the protagonist Othello, who is black, was played by a white man in blackface. My teacher said he wanted us to watch that version of the play because he thought the blackface was worth discussing. During our discussion in my class full of mostly white students and no Black people, no one mentioned the blackface until the very end when my teacher brought it up. Two white students proceeded to cautiously share their opinion on why blackface could be justified, and class ended shortly after.

I couldn't stop thinking about how the discussion could have been infinitely more impactful with the perspective of a black student or teacher, and how their voices were completely absent from a conversation that is about them. I felt and continue to feel that my education and understanding of the world has been hampered to a degree because of a lack of marginalized voices in my educational experience.

In my classroom, underrepresented voices would surely have enriched the conversation and elevated me and my classmates' understanding of the world. The same is true for the conversations had in making educational policy. Our statewide educational policies should not be stunted by a lack of representation and voice in the same way that my class discussion was.

In my classroom, it was simply not enough to have the perspective of minorities' considered, but they needed to be represented and heard. The same is true for the conversations had in making educational policy. To simply consider the experience of minorities from a distance while making policy is not enough. It is absolutely necessary to have them actually present and listened to.

To not actively include minority students in decisions that affect them on a daily basis is to continue a pattern of exclusion and is ultimately a form of discrimination. Students deserve to be a part of educational policy decisions that will affect them and their classmates for the rest of their lives.

Thank you.