

HB 2001, despite its intention to protect BIPOC employees working in Oregon public schools, has been used as fodder for those who want to create discord, by asking those running for office to choose between supporting unions and supporting those whose presence in our schools helps our students appreciate and accept diversity that strengthens our resolve to create a more perfect union where all are united as one. Our economic history, which should be taught along with our political history, in that one cannot be understood without understanding the other, tells us that underfunding education, healthcare, and human services calls on us to work together to achieve our potential.

Already, funding for public education is under attack. Those supporting progressive legislation are accused of sacrificing those who get in the way of their "political agenda." This legislation feeds into this false narrative.

As others have already told you, we need to take steps to increase our outreach to those members of our community who are not properly represented in our schools. That would include educating family members to enable them to work as aides in classrooms, school offices, and after-school programs. Seeking interns from community colleges to serve as tutors is another way to build a social infrastructure to support students in our schools. If we would take advantage of current legislation related to childcare and early education, we could invest in setting up childcare centers on campus that would allow disadvantaged families to get the education they need to support their children in the school and at home. This is especially true for predominantly Spanish-speaking families who have been marginalized by not having their own educational needs addressed. When we show respect for all those who have been marginalized, we will be laying a foundation for a curriculum that encourages agency in students and in teachers, where inquiry into the mysteries of language, art, and science make discovery a goal more important than getting the right answer.

In brief, HR 2001 addresses the wrong question and, therefore, cannot be the right answer. Table it and get on with the business of creating what will improve education for everyone in our state, instead of settling for less.