

Testimony in support, HB 2697A
Senate Committee on Education
Monday May 3, 2021, 3:15 PM

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen and Senators Gelser, Gorsek and Robinson,

My name is Mariotta Gary-Smith, and I am a member of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (herein OCBA). The OCBA's role is to work toward economic, social, political, and legal equity for Oregon's Black/African American population. We do this through advocacy, public policy research, leadership development and partnerships

I'm offering this written testimony in support for the proposed bill, HB 2697; relating to School Inclusivity prohibiting symbols of hate.

As a 3rd generation Oregonian and Portlander, I've heard stories from my family of harmful and racist symbols used against them during their educational experiences, promoted or allowed in schools or on school grounds. My family's personal investment in the civil rights/social justice landscape of Portland, and in turn the state of Oregon, echoes deeply when I hear of young students still being subjected to swastikas, burning crosses, and other racist and degrading symbols being permitted on school property. It is disturbing to think this is happening, after my parents attended school during the Civil Rights movement, and after my high school era in the late 80s.

All students - in all the ways they identify & exist - have the right to feel safe in their educational environments. Being harassed or traumatized by violent and disrespectful symbols is not part of the educational promise offered to them. And, while this is a small piece of the work needed to ensure that young people are safe as they attend school, it is also true that images impact how people feel in the spaces they inhabit.

As electeds, you all have multiple avenues to engage a focus that ensures school systems & their facilities are safe & inclusive for all students, and the larger community. I hope that you give strong consideration to support HB 2697 with your "Yes" vote.

Sincerely,



Mariotta Gary-Smith, OCBA Vice-Chair

