

Isabela Villarreal
333 SE 2nd Ave.
Portland, OR 97214

RE: Support SB 702

May 20, 2021



Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the committee,

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. As an organization that builds political power and strong, effective leadership pipelines for diverse young people we strongly support SB 702 which will give the opportunity for a civics emphasis during the social science standards review done by the Oregon Department of Education.

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.

SB 702 would require that during the State Board of Education's existing review of social studies standards for kindergarten through grade 12, they shall consider emphasizing and making accessible instruction related to civics education, while also involving various community stakeholders in the process to ensure that the educational system is responsive and addressing the needs and ambitions of 21st-century learners. Additionally, SB 702 allows for an in-depth discussion on creating accessible civics education related to: (a) Voting rights and how to vote; (b) Current and historical social movements; (c) The roles of local governments and tribal governments (d) The United States Constitution, the Oregon Constitution and the constitutional form of government in this country. Thank you to Senator Knopp for bringing part (d) to be part of this bill.

The bill passed with bipartisan support in the Senate and is supported by community organizations such as Forward Together Action, Oregon Student Association, and OLCV.

Please pass SB 702 so that there is an opportunity for an in-depth dialogue around how to improve our civics standards, that we can include more stakeholders to have a purposeful review of social studies standards, and finally, address any existing gaps of learning.

Thank you,

Isabela Villarreal
Policy and Communications Manager