



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2001
House Committee on Education

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek
February 23, 2021

Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2001. This bill has a simple, but important goal: maintain diversity ratios between teachers and students *in the event* of school district layoffs.

We have all heard from students about their need to have teachers who reflect their own lived experiences and how critical this is in order to chip away at historic inequities in our public education system. Many of you know firsthand how that critical connection between a student and teacher can dramatically improve the entire educational experience. I know this point was a common theme of the statewide tour some of you were on in 2018, when legislators heard input from local communities to help develop the Student Success Act. During that tour, for example, we heard about the need for bilingual education and that high-quality classrooms require policies that attract, recruit, and retain qualified teachers. We know that we have to do better at hiring and retaining a teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of Oregon's student population.

While we have much more work to do to meet our goals of a representational K-12 workforce, we also need to protect the gains we have made. House Bill 2001 provides an alternative consideration to seniority *if and when* budget cuts affect the diverse teacher ratio in a way that negatively impacts the state's ongoing commitment to racial equity in our public schools. This bill is one solution, in concert with other efforts, to fulfill our commitment to racial equity.

So, how are we doing in our goal to have a workforce that is truly representational of the students we are educating? During the 2018-19 school year, the Oregon Department of Education reports that only ~10 percent of teachers identified as people of color, compared to a student population of ~38 percent students of color. Our statewide student-to-teacher ratio is 19:1, but the statewide ratio of students of color to teachers of color is 68:1. We have to do more to close this gap, and I look forward to supporting proposals this session to aid in the recruitment and retention of teachers who represent historically underserved communities.

The legislature made progress on these goals by passing the Student Success Act in 2019. In 2020, we provided nearly \$15 million to the Educator Advancement Council to start scholarships for aspiring teachers and to work on a comprehensive plan with school districts and universities to recruit diverse candidates. This is a continuation of the state's ongoing efforts to invest in the recruitment, training, and retention teachers of color, like the Educators Equity Act of 2015.

I urge you to support House Bill 2001. During these uncertain times and the ongoing push for racial equity, we must not fall behind in our goal to ensure greater representation in the state's educator workforce. House Bill 2001 is a contingency plan, ensuring that the legislature's initiatives to recruit and retain teachers of color can be protected in the event of a budget crisis or other layoffs.

Thank you for your time and attention.