

Date: February 1st, 2022
To: House Committee on Education
From: Ronnie Strode, Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Ethnic Studies Professional Development 2022, HB 4112

Chair Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Ronnie Strode, and I am a policy analyst with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 4112. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African-Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security and quality of life. We do this by investing in stable housing; through workforce development; community health; education and well-being; for our youth, adults, and seniors. Our culturally specific programs and services, combined with our powerful advocacy and civic engagement, empowers Black communities to thrive across Oregon and SW Washington.

In 2017, the Oregon Legislature passed a landmark Ethnic Studies standard with bipartisan support to ensure our K-12 education system honors and integrates the rich and unique histories, contributions, and perspectives of traditionally underrepresented ethnic and social minority groups. To faithfully fulfill this vision, Oregon's current and future K-12 educators must be trained and supported to responsibly implement these standards with new lesson plans and instructional materials that are culturally responsive, accessible, and meaningfully enrich all students' learning.

Students of color need and deserve opportunities to learn about the unique histories that inform their own identities. Representation matters and through Ethnic Studies, educators can support our youth to gain insight into the past, the present, the future, and themselves by connecting these students with authors, scholars, and other voices who look like them. HB 4112 is a needed step toward racial equity and representation. By investing in professional development opportunities statewide, Oregon educators can fulfill the promise of Ethnic Studies and benefit all Oregonians by boosting student engagement, addressing academic disparities, and creating culturally affirming and accessible learning environments benefiting all students.

Oregon's Ethnic Studies standards can support educators and students to recognize the systemic inequities and oppression experienced by historically marginalized ethnic and social groups, including youth with disabilities. Investing in professional development will give educators the tools they need to teach Ethnic Studies, interrupt racism, ableism, and create equitable schools that are inclusive and welcoming for all students.

The Urban League of Portland is urging this body to take swift action to support our teachers and a curriculum that better represents and honors all Oregonians by passing HB 4112. Successfully implementing Ethnic Studies is an essential step toward a more inclusive, equitable, and racially just education system that graduates more Oregon

students who are better prepared to live, work, and thrive in a diverse world. Oregon is counting on you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronnie D Strode III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large "R" and "S", and the Roman numeral "III" is written with three vertical strokes.

Ronnie Strode
Policy Analyst
Urban League of Portland
Portland, OR 97227
Phone: 503.280.2600