

To: House Education Committee  
From: Children's Institute  
Date: February 2, 2022  
Re: HB 4112, Ethnic Studies Professional Development

Children's Institute is proud to join with the Oregon Partners for Education Justice in support of HB 4112 and an initial \$1.25 million for professional development for educators to implement Ethnic Studies standards in K-12 schools. If we are to live in an Oregon where communities across difference can respect one another, we have a responsibility to make sure teachers are trained in how to teach ethnic studies. Training and supporting educators across the state will ensure the K-12 education system honors and integrates the rich and unique histories, contributions, and perspectives of traditionally underrepresented ethnic and social groups.

The Oregon Legislature wisely passed landmark Ethnic Studies legislation in 2017, grounded in the knowledge that this boosts student engagement, builds greater unity, reduces academic inequities, and creates an affirming learning environments for all students.

Oregon's young children find themselves in a critical period of identity development. Children naturally seek to understand themselves and their peers. In this critical period of child development, representation of the full diversity of the American experience, taught well and without bias, is essential. When taught well, it builds community, when taught poorly it exacerbates division.. Research confirms that when young children are supported to develop their own identity, this is a means to be more inclusive of their peers.

The children we educate today will be Oregon's leaders of tomorrow. If we want to build a future where children hold empathy and understanding for one another, across differences, funding Oregon's commitment to Ethnic Studies is essential.