

Dear Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Weber and Neron, and members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Ji Reichle, I am a current senior at Lake Oswego High School as well as a student leader with the Oregon Association of Student Councils.

I urge you to support House Bill 4099 for numerous reasons, but I believe my reasons translate best through what I have lived and experienced in my life.

I am a leadership kid, I have been since 8th grade and it's why I have been so fortunate to learn about opportunities like being a part of the student executive council for the Oregon Association of Student Councils and joining the Capital Ambassadors Program, it's how I've ended up here today advocating for HB 4099. Being in these leadership positions are some of my favorite things about life.

Through a combination of dedication, hard work, connections, and having a support system I am doing things I want to do and believe that I am making an impact. I have been so lucky to know and earn opportunities and I want to make sure everyone who wants to, gets the same experience because I know there are many who want to but don't know how it could be possible. But it could be possible because this bill works to eliminate barriers for students so they can participate to their fullest potential, it builds in various forms of support and resources to ensure their success, such as providing mentors so the students feel safe and comfortable, or figure out ways around technology issues in this every technologically progressing world, and truly be a support system that meets its students in the middle by teaching them what they need to know, and providing them with both the mental and physical tools needed to get there.

This bill allows students to make the changes they want to see without having to worry about anything other than that change. We work to meet students where they are at. We have the capability to not only address present problems facing our youth, but improve our state for future generations to come. This bill not only provides an avenue for students to create change who experience the policies that are put in place but allows them to be successful in their efforts.

Furthermore, I believe that it is vital that not only the few of us who have been so fortunate to end up in recognized leadership places, get the same opportunities and have the same access to ensure an accurate representation of our state. One of the many things this collaborative will work on is to advise the state on how to create and support regional student leadership networks, especially for historically underrepresented and underserved students, and to do this work first hand knowledge will be incredibly valuable when making decisions to truly address the issues and solve them.

This representation is extremely important and will be ensured in this bill as it considers both geographical diversity and racial diversity. This issue of representation and historically having a lack of representation is something that resonates with me, because when you are one of two or three or the only person of color in the room, you become saddled with responsibility, to do no wrong, to speak for an entire group of people who have experienced wildly different ways of life, and decide whether or not you will be respected and heard the same as the rest of your colleagues. But by having a student collaborative that is representative of our state and it's students can begin to set the standards for the future.

In creating this collaborative, we can begin to rebuild and shape a system that for far too long has let its youth down, something myself and my peers have found throughout our years in school. Passing this bill invests in the chance for youth to reach their fullest potential, something that is often a luxury to few but should be available to all.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read my letter. I once again urge you to adopt HB 4099 because in adopting this bill, you are supporting our students and in turn the future of our state as it will inevitably land in the hands of these students.

