



Chair Lieber, Vice-chair Knopp, Rules Committee members,

My name is Mary Miller and I am the western Oregon chapter chair for the Independent Women's Forum, a national civic and family advocacy nonprofit.

I am here today to give public comment in opposition to the slate of executive appointments in front of you today.

Sen. Lieber, I appreciate your humor and lightheartedness, but I must respectfully disagree with your assessment that "this is like a parade of all that is good in Oregon." No. This is a parade of highly politicized left-wing radical appointments based on our governor's very personal and political priorities.

In particular I urge you to oppose the appointment of Charlene Williams for deputy superintendent of public instruction/director of the ODE.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU:

Senators, please ask yourselves two questions:

1. Why was Williams appointed?
2. Is Williams really the best candidate for the job?

CRISIS IN OREGON PUBLIC EDUCATION:

The state of Oregon is facing a crisis as taxpayers and employers are leaving the state in droves. Even with these demographic trends, Oregon employers are begging for high school graduates proficient in basic essential reading, writing, and math skills. During the 2021 deliberation over the Senate Bill 744 suspension of Essential Skills graduation requirements, the Oregon Business Council [explained it](#) this way: "[The Essential Skills graduation requirement] addressed a critical challenge communicated by employers and post-secondary institutions alike that many students did not have the reading, writing and math mastery needed to succeed. It was considered critical for ensuring an equitable education."

ODE DIRECTOR APPOINTMENT IN CONTEXT:

Given the current crisis in Oregon and Oregon's public schools, Ms. Williams is not the right candidate for the job, for three simple reasons:

1. Ms. Williams lacks the requisite experience. She has never led a school district and has never worked at the state level. What are her qualifications for this job?
2. Ms. Williams can point to no positive accomplishments in her work for school districts in Washington state or for Portland Public Schools.

In Washington state she did [lead a critical race theory book club](#) based on Robin DeAngelo's controversial book, *White Fragility* though.

Prior to her stints in Washington, Ms. Williams was formed for 15 years working for Portland Public Schools. Have all the new "inclusion" policies there led to any proven improvement in student outcomes? No. In her three years at the PPS central office (2014-2016) [high school reading and math test scores](#) declined 13% and 48%, respectively.

3. Ms. Williams vision for education is diametrically opposed to truly improving student outcomes. Her public statements indicate she will accelerate the activism-instead-of-academics trend in Oregon public education we have seen over the last 10 or so years, a disaster for Oregon and Oregon's public-school students.

In a [podcast interview last month](#), Ms. Williams used the buzzword "inclusion" but then further explained, and I quote, that "inclusion" means "being strategic" and "diminishing the extreme voices who don't want to hear and be part of the conversation." During that same 20-minute podcast Ms. Williams did not mention proficiencies or Oregon's abysmal test scores but instead spent more than 5 minutes discussing race-based hiring--specifically relocation benefits for teachers "of color." Some of this nonsense runs afoul of U.S. Civil Rights legislation and the U.S. Constitution. Ms. Williams also mentioned during the interview that her professional mentor is [Tammy Campbell](#). Ms. Campbell is an equity consultant in full support of critical race theory-based education.

In [her first report out](#) last week to the state board of education, Ms. Williams seemed to support eliminating the Essential Skills graduation requirement, adding graphic sex ed gender ideology to state-mandated standards, and updating the English Language Arts state-recommended textbook to include passages from far-left ideologues such as George Takei and Greta Thunberg. Ms. Williams said she wants more state-level control over Oregon's school districts and said she is focused on "creating legislation."

Is creating legislation an executive function, senators?

The catastrophe of Portland Public Schools is a canary in the coal mine for what will happen in all 197 school districts around the state if Ms. Williams is confirmed on Friday.

REQUEST:

I respectfully request that Ms. Williams's name be pulled from block consensus approval so senators can vote on her independently. And I ask that the Rules Committee not recommend Ms. Williams to lead the Oregon Department of Education but instead request that the governor find an alternate candidate that is better suited to support real educational success for the 600 thousand or so public-school students in the state of Oregon. Thank you.