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Date: September 28, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Rules and Executive Appointments

From: Craig Hawkins, Coalition of Oregon School Administrators  
Amber Eaton, Oregon Association of Education Service Districts  
Reed Scott-Schwalbach, Oregon Education Association  
Jim Green, Oregon School Boards Association  
Susan Miller, Oregon School Employees Association

Subject: Letter of Support for Dr. Charlene Williams' Confirmation as the Director of the Oregon Department of Education

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Dear Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules and Executive Appointments:

On behalf of the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators, Oregon Association of Education Service Districts, Oregon Education Association, Oregon School Boards Association, and Oregon School Employees Association, we write this letter to express our strong support for Dr. Charlene Williams' formal appointment as the Director of the Oregon Department of Education.

Dr. Williams is an inspiring education leader who centers students – and their full potential – in her work.

As an administrator, Dr. Williams' track record of success in improving outcomes for students speaks volumes to how she will lead the Department. For example, when Dr. Williams was the Principal at Roosevelt High School in North Portland, she led a collaborative team of teachers and administrators in closing the achievement gap across all academic areas through acceleration for students navigating poverty and students of color. Her leadership and dedication helped improve graduation rates and student performance at Roosevelt, and she has received accolades at the state and national level for her work for advancing student achievement.

Dr. Williams is deeply committed to advancing equity, student success, and academic excellence. In a recent interview, she discussed how her approach to equity is focused on the four B's - i) creating a sense of belonging; ii) believing in the limitless potential of every student; iii) removing barriers so that every student can achieve; and iv) broadcasting student voices.

As an Assistant Superintendent in Camas School District in Washington State, Dr. Williams worked with students, educators, and family and community partners to help the district adopt its first equity policy, establish affinity groups for students and staff, and design professional development opportunities to improve the alignment of district services to meet the needs of students and schools.

In her first few months leading the Department, our organizations have appreciated being able to connect with Dr. Williams and begin working together on implementing a number of education initiatives.

Dr. Williams is traveling the state to connect with students, educators, and staff to better understand Oregon schools and the needs of our students; engaging Department staff and education partners on the Department's strengths and opportunities for growth; and is utilizing what she is learning to further inform her work at the Department.

When you meet her, you will see that she is a brilliant, thoughtful, and strategic leader who can help continue to lead our education system in Oregon.

We are confident in Dr. Williams' leadership, and in how she is able to lead the Department and collaborate with education partners to support the success of every student across our state.

Thank you again for reviewing our letter of support. We urge you to confirm Dr. Williams as the Director of the Oregon Department of Education as expeditiously as possible.