

Submitter: Kyler Pace  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB854

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 854. My name is Kyler Pace, and I have been a public school teacher for 16 years as well as a member of the Oregon Education Association.

I am providing testimony today against SB 854 which would significantly expand and integrate climate change instruction across all K-12 core subject areas.

Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, now is not the time to implement additional unfunded mandates. Instead, we should be focused on initiatives such as making sure that all early educators have been trained in the Science of Reading to ensure that we are following established science. Ensuring that every child can read is a basic tenet of what we are charged to do as public educators.

In addition, the recommendation that SIA money is used to implement this bill means less money that districts will be able to use for already established programs. We are currently experiencing a crisis of mental health and behavior problems in our classrooms, and SIA money is funding mental health support for our students. Now is not the time to take money away from mental health support for our students.

Others will tell you that this bill will not create more work for teachers. I can assure you that this assertion is false. A mandate this far reaching (across all subject areas) will absolutely create more work for our teachers. We will have to take already established curriculum and modify every subject to meet the requirements of this bill. Even with additional resources, reframing what is taught will put an unnecessary burden on teachers who are not climate experts.

No matter what side of climate change you are on, this bill will bring more divisiveness into our schools. Our teachers do not need one more distraction to deal with. This bill takes a climate alarmist approach which is not universally agreed upon. On February 21, 2023, The Oregonian reported that Oregon public schools are down approximately 30,000 students since before the pandemic. SB 854 will give some families another reason to keep their kids out of public schools.

I urge you to vote against SB 854, Comprehensive Climate Change Education in Oregon Schools.

Thank you for allowing our Oregon teachers the ability to do their jobs without adding one more thing to their plate. Let us focus on teaching the essential skills that our students need to be successful in life.

Sincerely,  
Kyler Pace