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Colt Gill

Director of the Department of Education

**SB 421: Youth Advisory Council
Senate Education Committee
February 28, 2023**

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Zoe Larmer and I am the Government Relations Director for the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Senate Bill 421, which will include students in our education policy process. At this time, we have no position on the bill.

The Oregon Department of Education has been involved with policy development on this topic for several sessions. Currently there is no formal designated student body responsible for advising ODE and elevating the voices of our students, particularly those who continue to experience persistent inequities in our education system. In our own experience, ODE has benefited immensely from the input of student advisors on the State Board of Education and the Rules Advisory Committee, and this proposal would further elevate student voice and lived experience.

One note we would like to raise for the committee is the importance of protecting the students who may serve on the advisory council. These students would be dedicating their time, volunteering their knowledge, and entrusting us with sharing their experience. In this sometimes volatile political climate, we must ensure their safety and that their public service is met with gratitude, not harassment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments, and we welcome any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Zoe Larmer

Government Relations Director