

MAXINE E. DEXTER, MD
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 33



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services

Date: February 28, 2023

Subject: Support SB 421

Chair Dembrow and Vice Chair Weber:

For the record, my name is Dr. Maxine Dexter and I am honored to be the State Representative for House District 33, which includes NW & Downtown Portland, Linnton, and Cathedral Park. I respectfully submit this testimony in support of SB 421, which will create a Racial Justice and Youth Collaborative Council to represent youth from across our state.

SB 421 takes tangible action to institutionalize student voices from every corner of our state into political decision making. With each session, more and more young Oregonians engage in the political process and seek remedies to the issues that are facing their peers and communities, from educational inequities to climate justice. This younger generation are not only the leaders of the future, but are overcoming institutional barriers to be the leaders of today.

The reality is that Oregon's policymaking process is unnavigable for many youth. This is no accident – we know that these chambers were built for the powerful and privileged, not our youth and other marginalized communities. SB 421 will help disrupt this institutional barrier. The bill requires the membership of the Youth Advisory Council to include at least two youth (ages 11-21) from every education service district in Oregon. By ensuring that youth from a wide range of underrepresented identities, economic classes, geographic locations, and lived experiences are included, more communities will be empowered to work toward equity and justice for young Oregonians.

These youth will make recommendations on how to elevate and support youth and student leadership and youth-led and student-led accountability in the policymaking process at the state and local level and measure success.

Our youth have proven they have the insight and determination to seek change and this policy would empower them with a concrete platform and toolkit to help increase their success in effectively engaging in legislative processes. I know that many of my colleagues and I will continue to work to integrate student voices into our work and this bill will give more opportunities to integrate that effort into our educational system.

My sincere thanks to Senator Dembrow and many other colleagues from both the House and Senate for their leadership and partnership on this bill. I hope all of us can appreciate the importance of taking these steps to help spark and support many more action-oriented and civically engaged youth. This is an important step towards breaking down barriers for youth to be meaningfully engaged in crafting legislation that will impact their lives and future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maxine Dexter', written in a cursive style.

Representative Maxine Dexter, M.D.
House District 33 (NW & Downtown Portland, Linnton, & Cathedral Park)