



**Mission:** Empower Oregon families experiencing disability in their pursuit of a whole life by expanding awareness, growing community, and equipping families.

March 2, 2023

Chair Dembrow  
Vice-Chair Weber  
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

**RE: Support of SB 421 – Establish Youth Advisory Council**

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Committee,

**FACT Oregon is a family-led nonprofit that works toward a future where communities are accessible to, inclusive of, and empower the self-determination of, people with disabilities.** We support families, youth with disabilities, and partners to hold high expectations and set positive trajectory, navigate special education and disability systems and services, and advocate for the supports needed for youth to thrive at home, in school, and in community. Since 2012, we have served as the state and federally designated Parent Training and Information Center for special education.

**FACT Oregon holds that disability is a natural part of the human condition and that people experiencing it have the right and ability to create whole, self-determined lives.** We believe ableism must be dismantled and that there is no such thing as “too disabled” for self-determination. We appreciate the directive in Section 4 of the bill that **members of the advisory council include individuals who identify as being a child with a disability**, as defined in ORS 343.035. **Representation matters**, and including the voices of youth with disabilities, particularly those who might also identify as a member of another group that has historically been, or that currently is, underrepresented or underserved, is extremely important, as we know that the barriers experienced by youth with intersectional identities can be compounding.

FACT Oregon knows from our work with families and children how important it is to elevate the voices of youth and **we wholeheartedly support SB 421** and its creation of a Youth Advisory Council.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Christy Reese, Executive Director  
FACT Oregon