



Oregon Commission on Black Affairs

Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

For the record, my name is Liz Foucher-Branch; I am a Commissioner on the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA). I am writing in support of Senate Bill 3.

The OCBA serves the people of Oregon to empower and support the African American and Black community through our unique roles as policy advisors to Oregon state policymakers and leaders. The OCBA is a catalyst that allows partnerships between the state government and our community in rural and urban areas to ensure success for all African American and Black Oregonians by addressing longstanding and emerging issues at the policy level.

I can see the value in passing SB 3. During a recent community event, I listened to three recent high school graduates discuss student needs during a fishbowl presentation. All reported feeling cheated out of a well-rounded education. They spoke about the skills they didn't receive, although they all graduated on time. One out of three left the public school system and went to private school. All three attend college, two full-time and one part-time. One is a successful entrepreneur. Their conversation without adult input mentioned some content SB 3 addresses in future planning.

A bill like SB 3 matters because it is pulled from Oregon's labor shortage studies. The need to replace the lives lost during Covid-19, the pre-pandemic surge of retirements, and the dire need for a highly skilled, well-trained workforce. Future Planning can prepare high school students in four skill areas:

1. **Financial Literacy**- learn essential financial management, open a bank account, balance a checkbook, make a budget, and save for retirement. Just having the basics can help them make better financial decisions.
2. **Soft skills** - The most valuable skills are emotional intelligence, creativity, and communication which require negotiation and persuasion
3. **Workforce Pipeline** - via pre-apprenticeships programs or specific training for trades, healthcare, and education job shortages.
4. **Critical Thinking** - develop the necessary skills for a demanding workplace, like teamwork, self-regulation, and multicultural competency.

SB 3 can improve outcomes for students from high-poverty and low-income communities. Employers ask their employees to balance academic skill sets and emotional intelligence to solve our workforce needs and this bill provides them with those fundamental skills.

Oregon Commission on Black Affairs

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I support this bill but suggest an amendment to ***add an appropriations request*** to help financially support districts, teacher training, and students. The conversation in the fishbowl I mentioned earlier taught me that our young people often ask for resources, curriculum, and help that will equip them to transition from successful students to well-prepared adults.

Members of the committee, join me in supporting our student's transition into the workforce and adulthood by voting yes on SB 3.

Sincerely,



Commissioner Liz Fother-Branch


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Sources

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3. <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2022/03/oregon-legislature-approves-gov-kate-browns-200-million-workforce-plan.html>



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