

Advocating for Equity and Diversity throughout Oregon

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, Senator Fredericks, and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I am Liz Fouter-Branch, a Commissioner from the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA). I am writing to support SB 421, which will create a working group to set policies and procedures to establish the Department of Education Youth Advisory Council.

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.

Senate Bill 421 matters for several longstanding reasons:

- There has been a need to create a state-level youth advisory group that centers the voices of the diverse population's school districts serve and educate.
- It is the beginning of centering our focus on the most underrepresented and often undervalued youth in the district's broad range of diverse students.
- SB 421 has the potential to promote youth engagement and foster the Oregon Department of Education's (ODE) ability to better serve *all* students in the district.
- An advisory council like the one developed in SB 421 could change and improve how students feel concerning their perception of education statewide and across constituent groups.
- A Youth Advisory Council has the opportunity to promote civic engagement while youth learn what it is to serve at the state level.
- SB 421 empowers the workgroup to help find necessary resources to support a Youth Advisory Council.

I am excited to see local and state-level organizations create opportunities for Oregon youth to advocate for their needs through a robust civic engagement process. I fully support SB 421 with an amendment to consider and allocate any required budgetary appropriations to properly

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Black Affairs**

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fund the mission of SB 421 because this bill will change the landscape of future leaders of Oregon.

I urge the members of the committee to support its passage.

Thank you all for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,




Liz Foucher-Branch

Oregon Commission on Black Affairs



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