

Testimony From a Science, Math and CTE Teacher

Thank you, Committee, for welcoming us to speak with you today.

My name is Sarah Ruggiero Kirby. I am a Science and CTE Teacher and district coordinator of Outdoor School in Eugene, Oregon. I am a founding member of Oregon Educators for Climate Education (OECE), and helped to create Senate Bill 854.

I have been teaching CTE Natural Resource Management, Science and Math across the state of Oregon for the last 25 years. I have been teaching about climate science since before it was widely accepted to be a reality. In the course of my tenure working with public middle and high school students in Ashland, Eugene, and Portland, the lessons have evolved from showing compelling evidence of climate change happening, to current lessons around how we can change course, potential solutions, and how we can adapt and create climate resilient communities and economies. The science has been clear for years. The solutions will take prioritized, collaborative problem solving for years to come, and we need to start now by educating the generations of Oregonians who stand to inherit this problem, to help them adapt and create a future that is promising and solution-oriented.

I often hear that climate change education should be relegated to science classes, as it is indeed clearly supported in the Next Generation Science Standards, adopted by Oregon in 2017. We have heard from students that this is simply not enough. They are asking for more, which is how this bill was drafted. Students across the state report not getting enough information about climate change until high school science courses, and then it is often compressed into short units or pockets where an individual teacher cares to spend more time. We need to go beyond science. Students want to learn about the policies that inspire innovative solutions like community solar projects in Eastern Oregon, or how working and natural lands can be used for carbon sequestration, as in SB 530. They want to learn about social and community impacts, and adaptation and mitigation strategies that build community resilience. They find hope and inspiration in stewardship opportunities that support regional partnerships, and in exploring career pathways that will support their local economies. Students demand the knowledge, skills and ability to create solutions that will encourage sustainable economic development and well-adapted, thriving communities in the face of drought, wildfires and changing ocean conditions.

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I implore you to vote for Senate Bill 854 on behalf of our youth, future stewards and constituents of our state.

Thank you so much for your time and for listening today to the voice of educators and students across the state.