

Dear Senate Committee on Education: Chair Senator Michael Dembrow, Vice-Chair Senator Suzanne Weber, Senator Dick Anderson, Senator Lew Frederick, Senator Sarah Gelser Blouin, Senator Art Robinson and Senator Rob Wagner.

My name is Darin Henry and I am a retired high school campus supervisor. I advised our environmental club for 14 years. I am also a founding member of [Oregon Educators for Climate Education](#), or OECE. Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of SB 854. I will address wellintentioned concerns some lawmakers have expressed about the bill's feasibility.

To preface, I must explain that the 8 of the 9 members of OECE's steering committee are all full time public educators with children of their own volunteering any extra time to honor the request of their students to integrate climate lessons across all subjects. As educators, we fully understand the crisis school districts are facing as our colleagues leave the profession from excessive workloads and work-related responsibilities that go beyond teaching. It was from this perspective that we began drafting Oregon's Climate Education legislation.

To be clear, SB 854 only asks teachers to make connections to climate change within the scope and sequence of the curricula they already teach. Updating subject matter, and incorporating new teaching methods and standards is routine in the teaching profession, usually facilitated by professional development workshops offered by school districts, ESDs, or ODE on a continuous basis throughout the school year. Incorporating climate connections falls squarely within the norms of the teaching profession. This bill would, however, empower teachers, who currently feel reluctant or unwilling to teach about climate change and related issues because of a lack of permission or guidance of any kind.

In 2021, OECE began meeting with teachers from New Jersey where K12 Climate Education across all subjects is already adopted. New Jersey teachers enjoy a [Climate Lesson Hub](#) providing them with complete climate lessons and/or units organized by grade, subject, and geographic region. [Subject to Climate](#), the non-profit that produced New Jersey's hub, also updates and maintains it. This year, OECE and Subject to Climate signed a working agreement to provide Oregon teachers with a hub of their own. Last year, with funding from the Gray Family Foundation, OECE facilitated a Summer Climate Lesson Project inviting teachers throughout Oregon to develop climate lessons for varied subjects, grades and regions. The fifteen lessons from the summer lesson project are currently being added to [Oregon's Climate Lesson Hub](#). More lesson projects are planned for this summer.

Over the last four years, OECE has developed learning concepts and guidance tools, such as [this](#) for climate education specific to Oregon. We are confident that these concepts will provide a solid framework for the Oregon Department of Education to prepare a standard and implementation model. Using this model, school districts and/or ESDs can prepare their own educational place based models that would reflect each district's unique regional, economic and social conditions.

SB 854 is listed as possibly having a fiscal impact and resources seem available. Senator Prozanski's office is exploring the availability of Oregon's CAT Tax and IRA funding. At his Eugene town hall last year, US Senator Ron Wyden was enthusiastic about the bill and proposed accessing funds from the Department of Energy to meet US climate goals as climate education would significantly reduce CO2 emissions.

Healthy land is profitable land, is a popular saying in rural Oregon. This is a truism that people of all political persuasions can agree on. But maintaining healthy land becomes precarious in the face of Oregon's changing climate. According to the latest [climate report](#) from Oregon State University, "If greenhouse gas emissions continue at current levels, annual temperature in Oregon is projected to increase by 5 degrees by the 2050s and 8.2 degrees by the 2080s. Oregon's agricultural, fishing, tourism and recreational economies are at risk, making it imperative that all Oregonians, in cities and rural communities alike, understand their roles as stewards of this land. SB 854 is a sound and lucrative investment in our youth and the opportunities available to them. The bill's passage would help ensure a resilient, sustainable and prosperous Oregon, community by community. There isn't anything partisan about that.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to vote yes on Senate Bill 854.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Darin Henry
OECE Steering Committee