



PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Government Relations

March 10, 2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

On behalf of Portland Public Schools (PPS), I write to share our support for Senate Bill 854. This legislation will be an important step in ensuring that students have a deep understanding of climate change and a space to talk about extreme events happening before them, while equipping them with the tools to mitigate the impact of climate and environmental change and build a more climate resilient society.

Oregon's climate is changing. Youth across all corners of our state have witnessed one unprecedented event after another since their childhood. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and severity of fires that burn forests, grasslands, and desert vegetation across our state, and we can anticipate experiencing more heat domes like those in 2020. These events are devastating to local communities. Students need space in their schools to process and understand these types of events as they unfold.

Climate education will provide students with a strong knowledge base around the causes of a warming climate and a strong set of skills that will allow them to apply their knowledge in the real world, including problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, coping with uncertainty, and empathy. These are transferable skills that will empower students to meaningfully engage as citizens and to thrive in their respective workplaces. These skills would also support students in actively designing and leading projects aimed at curbing and/or adapting to climate change.

Portland Public Schools recognizes the importance of building these life skills and literacy for our students, and we are developing a vision for how a student should learn about climate change throughout their education that is developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive. We are excited to work alongside other districts in the state to build this developmental continuum to ensure that all students in Oregon are prepared for what the future holds and inspired to make a difference. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kat Davis
Advisor for Climate Justice
Portland Public Schools