



**COALITION OF
OREGON SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATORS**

Coalition of Oregon School Administrators
707 13th Street SE, Ste. 100
Salem, Oregon 97301
Phone 503-581-3141
www.cosa.k12.or.us

Date: February 8, 2024

To: Senate Education Committee

From: Dr. Majalise Tolan, President-Elect, COSA Board of Directors and Superintendent of Lincoln County School District

Subject: Letter of Support for SB 1552-1 - The Youth Advisory Group

Good Afternoon, Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Majalise Tolan, and I am serving as the President-Elect for the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators' Board of Directors. I'm also the Superintendent of Lincoln County School District.

We support SB 1552 with the -1 amendment. The first section of the bill outlines provisions for a Youth Advisory Group, which would include statewide representation of student voice.

Student voice is important and matters, but we have fallen short in hearing all of them.

While some believe students should self-advocate and tell us about unfair treatment, for historically and currently underrepresented or underserved students, this is not that easy. And while adults and advocates have begun increased efforts to include student voice in local decision making efforts, it is still a far cry from truly hearing from across the state when statewide decisions also directly impact students on a daily basis.

Throughout my career, I have worked with thousands of students from across the state. Learning from them in the moment has been a blessing, but learning from them after they have been out of our system has taught me even more about how much work we still have to do.

On my journey in this work, a former student provided examples of times policies were used painfully against her and I had been blind to her perspective. Families have shared examples of hate speech directed at our students during athletic events. These incidents still happen today, and not all students have those actively stepping in to take action, and not all have a place to share these stories.



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Student voice inclusion should not be up to chance. Statewide representation is critical for all students to be represented and empowered to voice necessary change on issues that impact them regularly.

Students across the state have weighed in on issues in walk-outs, social media campaigns, and school board visits, but have still lacked the ability to come together in a larger effort to weigh-in on statewide issues that matter.

At our annual Oregon Students United Summit, we hear empowered students with a desire to improve our systems. They are passionate about improvement - something we should all share. They need our help in providing a way to allow them to work with administrators, community organization leaders, and Oregon Department of Education staff to make positive changes for all Oregon students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, or disability.

If we believe “all means all” and student voice matters, I urge you to pass SB 1552 with the -1 amendment. The Youth Advisory Group would create a statewide platform for students, inclusive of students of color, who identify as LGBTQ2SIA+, who are emerging bilingual, and/or who are experiencing disability to work with trained adults to analyze student input, process ideas, review policies, and provide feedback.

I urge you to vote YES on SB 1552-1 and codify the Youth Advisory Group.

Sincerely,

Dr. Majalise W. Tolan

President-Elect, Board of Directors, Coalition of Oregon School Administrators
Superintendent, Lincoln County School District