



February 8, 2024

Senate Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support Senate Bill 1552

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,000 supporters statewide. **We strongly support Senate Bill 1552, Section 1, which would create a youth advisory group and better our understanding of disparities in our education system.**

All students have a right to an equal education, but students of color — particularly Black and brown students and students with disabilities — have historically been marginalized, excluded, and even criminalized by the public school system. As the Supreme Court said in *Brown v. Board of Education*, education “is the very foundation of good citizenship.” Through education, young people learn important values about our culture, democratic society, and peer relationships. In addition to being an important foundation for kids’ and young adults’ future professional success, education allows individuals to be informed voters and participants in democratic processes.

Accordingly, Oregon’s education system lays the groundwork for our democracy and for the future opportunities students will have. However, Oregon continues to have significant disparities and gaps in education for our Black, brown, Indigenous, low-income, LGBTQIA+, and disabled student populations. In order to best address these disparities, we need to ensure we are listening to the lived experiences and perspectives of the students navigating our public education system.

The Oregon Youth Leadership Group will focus on improving educational outcomes for students from historically marginalized backgrounds in Oregon by identifying best practices for reporting racism and hate crimes in schools, providing student support, and promoting educational equity. The group will report to the legislative body and the Governor every two years with policy recommendations that directly impact these goals.

By passing Senate Bill 1552, you would improve educational equity in our state and strengthen our democracy by including the voices of youth in policy-making that directly impacts them. **The ACLU of Oregon urges your support for Senate Bill 1552 and asks you to pass it out of committee.**

Respectfully,

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