

From Ashley Clemens, IB Coordinator - Hillsboro High School, Hillsboro

Testimony in support of HB 4137

I am writing to express my **support for House Bill 4137**, which proposes to allow students who successfully complete the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program in Oregon to have this qualification fulfill their high school graduation requirements. I have been an IB educator for 14 years, in three countries and across four different program-related roles, and I believe that this bill holds tremendous promise for enhancing the educational landscape in Oregon.

The IB Diploma Program is a **rigorous, internationally recognized and moderated**, two-year interdisciplinary course of study. High school students who successfully complete the following requirements of the IB Diploma Program are awarded an IB Diploma:

- completion of six college preparatory courses across the 11th and 12th grade years that cover every academic discipline, including: English, Math, Social Science, Science, World Language and the Arts
- successful completion of IB Exams and portfolio-type coursework submissions in these six subject areas, plus a seventh Theory of Knowledge course, which are scored by outside evaluators, much like AP exams are scored by the College Board
- completion of a community engagement project
- completion of a 4000-word independent research paper in a subject and topic of their choosing

The IB Diploma is recognized in over 70 countries and by more than 2,000 universities. That vast numbers of high education institutions recognize the value of the IB Diploma, and award significant credit to students who successfully engage with IB coursework at various levels, speaks to the wide awareness of the caliber of the IB curriculum.

I have been an IB educator at Hilhi for 11 years, and our school has qualified for Title 1 designation for all of them. In a school that serves a large number of students who have been historically underserved in our state's education system, I have consistently seen strong engagement with the IB Diploma Program and known hundreds of young people who have worked through this program and emerged from high school with their IB Diplomas, college credits, and a toolkit for:

- knowledgeable civic engagement
- maintaining a life-long love of learning
- practicing critical thinking
- navigating systems and systemic challenges
- global citizenship that accounts for different perspectives
- persistence and integrity

By recognizing the IB Diploma as equivalent to a standard high school diploma in the state of Oregon, HB 4137 would rightfully acknowledge the academic and personal growth achieved by IB students, bring us into step with other states leading on this issue, and **improve access** to this program for all Oregon students.

Improved access will be a major result of this proposed bill. At Hilhi, just about 85% of 11th and 12th grade students take at least one IB course - the majority taking 3 or more! - but less than 1% pursue the IB Diploma. This is not a skills gap or a demographic gap - it is an access gap. Barriers faced by Hilhi students considering the IB Diploma include:

- **scheduling conflicts**
 - competing program requirements
 - *singleton courses*
 - *full schedules with no space for targeted support*

- **course overlaps**
 - **health and physical education**
 - **various social science requirements**
- **elective requirements**
- credit gaps due to transferring schools or districts

Those barriers **bolded** above are barriers that will be alleviated by this legislation; those *italicized* are barriers that will be lessened as a domino effect. Many of the students at Hilhi who engage with the IB Diploma Program also participate in the dual language program, play multiple sports, do any number of extracurriculars, work more than part time, and/or act as a primary caretaker for family members. Some of these students will be first generation high school graduates and more will be first generation college students. In a time when we know our young people are stressed, when mental health challenges are at a crisis level, when students are struggling to find balance between their obligations and their freedom, this bill could be a balm that helps to ease some of those tensions for our students. HB 4137 will break down barriers and validate the merits of the IB Diploma as a **demanding, globally recognized credential** without saddling our students with extraneous and duplicate requirements; **it will ease the load without easing the rigor**.

I urge you to support House Bill 4137 and show to our students across the state you are invested in **advancing educational equity** and excellence in Oregon. It is beyond doubt that students who earn the IB Diploma are **equivalently (if not exceedingly) prepared for success beyond high school** and this bill will make the IB Diploma Program both more accessible and inclusive, allowing all students to have the opportunity to thrive academically and prepare for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective and for giving House Bill 4137 the careful consideration this issue deserves.

With gratitude,

Ashley Clemens