



March 6, 2024

TO: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction
FROM: Our Children Oregon, Children's Agenda
RE: Support for SB 1552, Oregon Youth Advisory Group

Dear Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee

Our Children Oregon (OCO) is a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. The Children's Agenda, convened by OCO, brings together ~135 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2024 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families. **This year, the Oregon Youth Advisory Group (SB 1552) is a top priority of the 2024 Children's Agenda.**

Our youth in Oregon learn best when they feel safe, seen, heard, and valued. It is a critical time to start listening to the voices of youth and let them teach us. Youth in Oregon are experiencing a world we could never imagine, and it is critical for us to bring forward their voices, experiences, and needs. Collaboration is essential not only for youth to be the drivers and decision-makers of policies, but also to center and recognize the diversity of Oregon's youth population. According to OCO's KIDS Count Data Cards, Oregon is becoming more diverse—23,000 youth identify as LGBTQ2SIA+, 79,782 youth with disabilities, 156,614 youth of immigrant parents, and 289,800 youth of color.¹

We strongly support SB 1552, the Oregon Youth Advisory Group, as it will prioritize youth voices from historically and currently marginalized and underserved communities. Today, Oregon lacks a youth majority-led advisory body that assists in policy-making based directly on their experiences. SB 1552 creates a process for youth leaders to convert their wisdom and experiences into policy-making at the state level. The Youth Advisory Group will help break the historic exclusion of students of color, LGBTQ2SIA+ students, emerging bilingual students, and students with disabilities seeking racial equity and justice. By including and supporting diverse youth leaders, they will positively impact the lives of Oregon's youth today, tomorrow, and beyond.

¹ <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregon-kids-count/>

We urge you to take into further consideration the Youth Advisory Group as diverse youth leaders are essential to our present and our future. We are counting on your support for SB 1552 to elevate diverse youth leaders, integrate their perspectives, and share their stories.

Sincerely,

Our Children Oregon
 Oregon Association of Student Councils
 Clackamas Women's Services
 Community Action Team
 FACT Oregon
 Farmworker Housing Development Corp.
 IRCO
 Metropolitan Family Service
 Nurse-Family Partnership

Oregon Alliance of YMCAs
 Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries
 Oregon AG's Sexual Assault Task Force
 Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials
 Oregon Environmental Council
 Oregon Primary Care Association
 Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
 Southern Oregon Success
 Trillium Family Services
 Washington County Kids

