

February 12, 2025

To: House Committee On Education

From: Grace Fortson, Our Children Oregon

Subject: Support for HB 3200, Bolstering Educator Diversification

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire , and Members of the Committee:

My name is Grace Fortson and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager with Our Children Oregon (OCO). OCO is a statewide nonprofit committed to whole child wellbeing through the Children's Agenda- a comprehensive legislative agenda created and supported by our over 135 member organizations across the state. I am testifying to represent both my personal support for HB 2588 as well as OCO's official endorsement of this bill as part of the Children's Agenda.

Many of you are likely already aware that Oregon ranks 43rd in the nation regarding educational success according to the 2024 Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2024 KIDS COUNT data. This metric is based on the number of 3-4 year olds in school, number of on-time highschool graduations, as well as proficiency in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math. This data also shows that students of color have overall far worse educational outcomes than their white peers. There are many factors that contribute to this: poverty, generational educational outcomes, and lack of diversity in educators.

To zoom in a bit, I'd like to share my own story. As a biracial person of color, it took 11 years in the education system to have a teacher that was not white. That teacher was the only non-white educator I encountered in my K-12 education. Across three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school, Ms. Hutcheson was the only educator of color. Please note, I am not saying I lacked access to an educator that represented my own race/ethnicity, but ANY educator of color. She immediately became a role model for me and other students of color. I appreciated this teacher immensely and her perspective on history and government as a person of color

helped launch me into my current career.

One of the most prominent obstacles to increasing diversity in our educators are barriers to entry. This is addressed through HB 3200's proposal to increase funding for the Oregon Teacher Scholars Program (OTSP). Bolstering educator diversification is synonymous with bolstering student success. Research from New York City and from North Carolina demonstrate that increasing numbers of educators of color leads to reduction in exclusionary discipline ([New York City Study](#), DOI: 10.26300/3jqw-5x05, [North Carolina Study](#), DOI: 10.3102/0162373717693). The OTSP has been successful in reducing barriers to entry in the past. In order to address Oregon's educational outcomes, we continue to invest in proven programs like the OTSP.

Thank you,

Grace Fortson, Policy and Advocacy Manager