

Submitter: Aspen Evans
On Behalf Of: OurFuture Oregon
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3365

Dear Members of the Oregon House Education Committee,

My name is Aspen, and I'm a senior at Summit High School in Bend. At Summit, I am president of our school's Environmental Club, and I am also an involved member of the Green Leadership Coalition, a group of environmentally focused high schoolers in Central Oregon who work regularly with our school district and city council to advance sustainability policy in our schools. Additionally, I'm writing as a representative of the Oregon-based group OurFuture, which is a network that connects high school students around the state and allows us to collaborate on various climate justice and environmental policy projects, including having worked on the initial draft of this very bill.

I am writing to you about House Bill 3365 in addition to my virtual testimony because, in my mind, educating about climate change and raising awareness of ways people can get involved in their own lives is one of the most effective ways to combat the ongoing climate crisis. I have been heavily involved in environmental work the past few years, and through these experiences I have learned a great deal about the ways in which the effects of climate change are woven into our lives. Last year, my Environmental Club and I hosted a holiday gift give at a lower-income school in our community to repurpose old childhood toys during the holiday season, and speaking with one of the families attending the event, I learned that they had immigrated to the United States because of the effects that climate change was having on their small hometown in Nicaragua. Even here in Bend, an outdoor sanctuary in many ways, we are experiencing the effects of climate change firsthand- toxic air quality from summer wildfires, pollution in the Deschutes River, and spiking temperatures, just to name a few.

Outside of my responsibilities, I spend the majority of my time in the outdoors. This time is, quite often, when I feel most at peace in the world, and I'm well aware of the privilege that this entails. It devastates me to know that these natural spaces, which hold deep importance to so many people around the world, are under attack and continuously treated as commodities rather than the wonders that they are; not to mention the countless scientifically proven benefits of preserving outdoor spaces, both for personal wellbeing and for the health of entire ecosystems and communities. Living in a state with as much natural beauty as Oregon, it can be easy to forget that our rights to enjoy these places must be protected and worked for.

Additionally, having spoken with several of my teachers about their views on the implementation of climate education into schools, they reflect my belief that educating students about climate change in a comprehensive and age-appropriate manner is an important first step in empowering the future generation to become the changemakers that our world desperately needs right now. As our state legislature, and representatives of Oregon's citizens, you have the power to advance a bill that can have a significant impact in our state, and set a leading example for ways that other states around America can address the climate crisis. I urge you to support HB 3365. Thank you for your time.