

Kiara Conway

13 March 2025

## Why Climate Education Matters

Dear Chair Neron and members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 3365. My name is Kiara Conway, and I am a current graduate student at the University of Oregon. In just a matter of months, I will have my teaching license and officially step into my role as an educator here in Oregon.

I grew up in a small town on the Oregon Coast, and for much of my K-12 education, I knew little about what was happening to our climate and our world. It wasn't discussed by my teachers at all, or when it was, it felt distant—like a problem too big for me to have any say in.

We are now in a time when this issue is more urgent than ever. Because of the way our legal and political systems are structured, it is older generations who make the laws that define the realities of younger generations—students who will be here much longer than we will. As adults, we have a collective responsibility to ensure that all students are equipped with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to take on the challenges that climate change presents.

But climate education is not about fear—it's about empowerment. It's about showing students that solutions exist and that they can be part of them. Green energy, for example, is one of the fastest-growing sectors of our economy. If students don't learn about it in K-12 education—what it is, how it works, and how they might contribute to it—how can they ever feel prepared to pursue careers in this field? Climate education ensures that all students, no matter where they come from, have access to the knowledge and opportunities they need for the future.

### **Climate change belongs in every subject because it affects every aspect of our world.**

In Language Arts, students can analyze climate-related literature, research environmental justice issues, and use persuasive writing to advocate for change. Stories shape culture, and by engaging with texts that explore environmental themes, students learn how narratives can drive action.

In Math, students can work with real-world data, analyzing temperature trends, calculating carbon footprints, and applying statistics to understand climate patterns. Math is not just about numbers—it's about making sense of the world around us, and climate data provides a powerful, relevant way to do that.

In Civics and Social Studies, students can explore how policy decisions impact the environment, examine historical movements for environmental justice, and consider the role of government and advocacy in addressing the crisis. Teaching climate change through a social and political lens empowers students to engage with their communities and become informed citizens.

**You have an opportunity to use your power in a way that uplifts future generations and prepares them for what's ahead.**

One of my favorite quotes is: "*Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better; do better.*" —Maya Angelou. Supporting this bill ensures that our students will know better—so that they can do better, not only for themselves but for all the generations that will come after them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kiara Conway