

Submitter:

Thomas Ellis

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB3365

I am a retired English professor and lifelong advocate for environmental awareness and responsibility, who moved to Salem from Virginia after I retired in 2017. I am here today to strongly encourage the Oregon State Legislature to pass HB 3365 A, which "directs the State Board of Education to ensure that academic content standards for core subjects include sufficient instruction on the causes and effects of climate change and strategies for responding to such causes and effects."

Let's face it: the climate crisis is terrifying to contemplate, in light of the vast amount of thoroughly documented evidence by climate scientists all over the world that the long-predicted disruption of our global climate due to our dramatically increasing fossil fuel emissions is happening--and accelerating. This acceleration is confirmed by the lived experience of millions in recent years--including our fellow Oregonians--who have suffered and died from unprecedented heat waves, droughts, wildfires, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes. So the stark reality of accelerating anthropogenic climate disruption can no longer be denied by anyone who still lives in the reality-based world.

Unfortunately, our recently elected President, Donald Trump, does not fit into this category. Since he first entered politics, Mr. Trump has ignored or ridiculed the encroaching reality of climate disruption, and now, as he arrogates unprecedented power to himself, he has taken appalling steps to erase any mention of "climate" from federal websites, while slashing federal funds for climate research, education, and mitigation, as well as for research and development of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.

Trump also is attempting to bully state governments into following his lead on suppressing any and all information about the realities of climate disruption from the public, and threatening those states who insist on telling the truth about what is happening to our planet. We cannot allow ourselves to be intimidated by such bullying. As George Orwell once said, "In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act."

So at this critical juncture of history, when our life-sustaining planet and our noble experiment in federalism, democracy, and the rule of law are at risk as never before, we have the sacred, non-negotiable obligation to tell our children the truth. But how? As I mentioned, the climate crisis is terrifying to contemplate. So we must teach them about the daunting challenges that their generation will face in a manner that is mindful, strategic, and relentless. This means age-appropriate instruction, setting

good examples, teaching them to love the magnificent planet they are inheriting, and encouraging them to remember the wise words of Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Thank you for your time.