



Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Webber, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cynthia Branger Muñoz, and I submit this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Education Association (OEA), which represents more than 42,000 educators across Oregon—including early learning professionals, classroom teachers, counselors, specialists, education support professionals, and community college faculty and staff—serving students from preschool classrooms to community colleges.

We write today in strong opposition to Section 5 of HB 3026-A. The amendment proposed in this section removes clear, equity-driven language that prioritizes the hiring of *linguistically and culturally diverse* educators and replaces it with vague references to “diverse backgrounds or experiences.”

It is important to clarify that *linguistically and culturally diverse* does not mean race-based hiring. It refers to educators who bring lived experience, language fluency, and cultural knowledge relevant to the students and families they serve. This includes educators who:

- Speak Spanish and work with migrant students in Hood River;
- Are fluent in Chuukese and support families in Salem-Keizer schools;
- Grew up in rural Slavic-speaking communities and now teach in East Multnomah County;
- Are heritage speakers of Indigenous Mexican languages like Mixtec or Zapotec in the Willamette Valley;
- Come from Deaf or signing households and connect directly with students who use ASL.

These educators may come from any racial background—but what unites them is their ability to serve Oregon’s multilingual, multicultural classrooms with understanding and authenticity.

Our members teach in every type of district in this state—urban, rural, coastal, and frontier. They work with students who speak more than 80 languages at home, including Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Somali, and Chinuk Wawa. In many classrooms, educators are the bridge between the school system and families who have historically been marginalized or excluded. When students have educators who reflect their racial, cultural, and linguistic identities, they experience increased engagement, stronger academic outcomes, and a greater sense of belonging. That connection is not symbolic—it’s transformative.

The Oregon Teacher Scholars Program (OTSP) exists to support exactly this kind of educator: multilingual, culturally grounded, and often historically underrepresented in the teaching profession. OTSP was designed as a direct response to Oregon’s own acknowledgment of the racial and linguistic gaps in its educator workforce. The statutory language struck in Section 5



provides the clear and focused foundation for programs like OTSP. Replacing that clarity with generalized language weakens both the policy intent and the state's ability to track and enforce progress toward its diversity goals.

Educators who are linguistically and culturally diverse are not a checkbox. They are an asset to our schools, our families, and our state. If we are serious about equity, our laws must reflect that—clearly and unequivocally.

We urge you to amend HB 3026-A to restore the original language prioritizing linguistically and culturally diverse educators or remove Section 5 altogether.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.