

5/8/25

Dear Chair Fredrick and members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 3365. My name is Rena Dunbar. I am a former teacher of over 20 years in Eugene classrooms. I have spent most of my adult life dedicated to supporting the futures of young people through language arts, social studies, and ethnic studies education. I strongly support HB 3365 - which seeks to expand and integrate climate change instruction across all K-12 core subject areas (language arts, sciences, mathematics, social studies, health, physical education and the arts). All our children need climate education at this pivotal moment in time.

I moved to Oregon in 1995 to take advantage of the opportunity to live a healthier lifestyle with close access to old growth forests, cold clean rivers, beautiful mountains, and the Pacific Ocean. I was born in Los Angeles, and even in the 1970s, the air and water was tainted and growing worse while access to green spaces were quickly becoming only available to those with money. I grew up disconnected from nature and did not have to opportunity to learn that a healthy environment is vital for healthy humans; although, I deeply felt the disconnect and suffered from depression and probably from what is now known as Nature Deficit Disorder.

Once I moved to Oregon, I started camping, hiking, and went to school to earn my master's in education. I fell in love with the natural beauty that surrounded me, started a family, and started teaching in 1998. Even at that time, my students and I were aware that our climate was indicating a crisis that was affecting many around the world. While we studied and learned about these impacts, it always felt as if our class was an outlier and honestly, I had to search for materials and curriculum that was accessible and developmentally appropriate for the secondary language arts and social studies classroom.

Honestly, I was surprised and disappointed at the lack of a focused environmental curriculum at the reputed high school where I taught. Wouldn't the parents and teachers of the brightest minds in Eugene want their students to learn about the ways in which our planet was changing? Wouldn't these same folx want their young people to be educated enough to confront the large problems they would be facing as the globe warms up?

I believe deeply that if this bill is passed, students of Oregon would finally have the opportunity to learn about the land upon which they live and their role in preserving the ecosystems which they will inherit. Access to robust, well-researched, and peer reviewed climate education from grades K-12 will create more informed and empowered students who will be equipped to deal with the challenges faced by the inevitable crises and more capable to work on solutions to address climate concerns.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB 3365- Comprehensive Climate Change Education in Oregon schools and for students to have a chance to courageously engage in education that will truly make a difference on their (and our) future.

Thank you for your support of HB 3365! It is time for Oregon to take leadership in becoming the second state to legislate comprehensive climate education.

Sincerely,  
Rena Dunbar, Ded  
Faculty Researcher  
University of Oregon