

May 8, 2025 Statement in Support of HB 3365 Breck Foster, Oregon Educators for Climate Education

I urge strong support for HB 3365, which ensures that climate education is protected, prioritized, and equitably accessible across Oregon. While climate change has both natural and human causes, the overwhelming scientific consensus is that recent global warming is largely driven by human activity. Despite this, climate education remains politically sensitive, leading to inconsistencies in how—or if—it is taught in our schools.

Opposition to HB 3365 often reflects concerns that climate education may be politicized, overly complex, or a distraction from core learning. In fact, high-quality climate education is grounded in science and supports project-, problem-, and place-based learning. When integrated thoughtfully, it enhances—not replaces—existing standards. It builds critical thinking, systems understanding, and career-connected learning in a way that resonates with students and prepares them for the future.

Some argue legislation isn't necessary, but we've seen firsthand how easily unlegislated content can be removed in future curriculum cycles. Without HB 3365, many teachers feel unprepared or unsupported to teach climate topics—especially in politically divisive regions—leading to uneven access for students. Young people have expressed anger and confusion at learning the full extent of the climate crisis only in high school, long after foundational understanding should have begun.

Concerns that this is an unfunded mandate overlook the reality that professional development and resource-building are already part of the work done by school districts, ESDs, and Regional Educator Networks (RENs), which have discretion over how to allocate funds. The implementation proposed in this bill is gradual and aligned with Oregon's existing standards adoption process.

Moreover, Oregon already has a robust infrastructure to support climate education. Statewide communities of practice meet regularly to strengthen educator capacity. University-led programs already provide excellent professional development and teacher training to build upon. Government agencies such as Metro and Portland Public Schools, Garden, Outdoor Education and Extension programs have environmental and climate education in place. Free, open-source materials are readily available via OER Commons, the Tribal History/Shared History curriculum, and other platforms—removing the need for costly formal curriculum adoption.

Across Oregon—from the coast to Eastern and Southern regions—nonprofits, school districts, STEM Hubs, and ESDs are already engaged in this work. Organizations like the Oregon Climate Action Hub and Partners for Sustainable Schools offer localized, action-based learning. Climate networks across the state provide free learning opportunities, and the Oregon Climate Education Hub, created by the bill's authors (Oregon Educators for Climate Education) in partnership with SubjectToClimate, offers free, standards-aligned lesson plans and training for educators.

In short, Oregon is not starting from scratch. We have the structure, organizations, and expertise to support this work. What's needed now is the commitment—through legislation—to ensure all students, regardless of geography or politics, gain the knowledge and tools to thrive in a changing world.

HB 3365 is a small but critical step toward building resilient, informed communities and empowering future generations to lead with innovation, courage, and care. Please support this important legislation.