

# Education

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## Every Student Belongs, K-12

This week we focus on equity, diversity and inclusion in Oregon's Education system. This is a common theme impacting many aspects of this legislative session as shown, for example, by the [House Bill 2167](#), which will codify into state law the Racial Justice Council (RJC). The Governor convened the RJC last summer to center the perspectives of Oregonians of many different backgrounds and life experiences. Members of Oregon's Black, Indigenous, Native American, Tribal, Latino, Latina, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and communities of color from across the state came together to create the Council; to focus on transformative change; and to build a better Oregon. The bill ensures this work will continue beyond the Governor's tenure.

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) recognizes "that student health and safety are the cornerstone of education and that all students are entitled to a high-quality educational experience, free from discrimination or harassment based on perceived race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin, and

without fear or hatred, racism or violence. All staff and leaders are also entitled to work in environments that are free from discrimination or harassment, and visitors should be able to participate in school activities without fear for their safety.” “[The Every Student Belongs](#)” rule prohibits hate symbols, specifically three of the most recognizable symbols of hate in the U.S.—the swastika (outside of a religious context), the Confederate flag, and the noose. [Guidance](#) for School Districts with [Policy Q and A](#) set expectations. Many bills this session focus on school equity, diversity and inclusion; as do budget requests from ODE.

[LWVOR joined](#) in support for [HB 2697](#) because it is critical that Oregon schools provide a safe environment for all youth free of hate and bias symbols and related behaviors. The League Action Team now includes a Human Rights Portfolio led by Claudia Keith who facilitated this testimony.

[HB 2001](#) attracted strong [verbal](#) and [written](#) testimony (pro and con). It requires a school district that is making reductions in educator staff positions to retain a teacher with less seniority if the teacher has more merit and if retention of the teacher is necessary to maintain a school district's diversity ratio. Research consistently shows that students succeed when teachers “look like students” and efforts have increased BIPOC and Latinx educators. Union represented educators with seniority and longevity have objected to the bill. House Speaker Kotek, sponsor of the bill, [testified](#) “this bill has a simple, but important goal: maintain diversity ratios between teachers and students in the event of school district layoffs. We have all heard from students about their need to have teachers who reflect their own lived experiences and how critical this is in order to chip away at historic inequities in our public education system.” Another bill with strong union interest will be heard next week. [SB 580](#) would amend the definition of “employment relations” to include class size and caseload limits as mandatory collective bargaining subjects for school districts.

## Higher Education Bills

- [SB 551](#) provides that part-time faculty member at public institution of higher education who qualifies for health care benefits will pay 10 percent of insurance premiums for employee coverage. [Verbal](#) and [written](#) testimony shared painful economic and health stories from college and university teachers who don't have health care and are paid much less for equivalent time than full-time teachers and professors.
- [HB 2589](#) requiring public institutions of higher education to bypass developmental educational requirements and placement tests for each student who receives a grade on an approved high school equivalency test indicating the student is fully qualified to bypass requirements and tests.
- [HB 2868](#) establishes minimum education requirements for teachers of certain accelerated college credit program courses.
- [HB 2919](#) requires each public university and community college to prominently display total costs of all required course materials and fees for no less than 75 percent of total courses offered by the public university or community college.
- [HB 2542](#) requires each public university and community college to prominently display mandatory fees charged.
- [HB 3012](#) limits the ability of a public university to refuse new mandatory incidental fees or process for collecting mandatory incidental fees.

Next week additional higher education bills to be considered are:

- [SB 233](#) requiring the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to establish a common course numbering system for all introductory and lower level courses offered at public post-secondary institutions of education.
- [SB 76](#) integrates foundational curricula and unified statewide transfer agreements into the Transfer Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities.
- [SB 564](#) requires HECC to design a question or questions allowing each student to identify whether the student is a parent or person

acting as parent or legal guardian. The question will be placed on one or more forms used on an annual basis to collect demographic information by public post-secondary institutions of education.

## Early Childhood

- Public hearings expanded to two days on [2/22](#) and [2/24](#) for: [HB 3073](#) that transfers employee related day care ERDC and additional responsibilities directed to young children to the Early Learning Authority; and [HB 2503](#) that expands eligibility for certain child care subsidy programs. LWVOR provided both verbal and [written testimony](#) noting that the Early Learning Division created by law in 2011 has proven effective, has a more stable funding source under the Student Success Act, and this expansion of authority is congruent with governance in other states.

## Looking Ahead

- Partly due to the impact of Covid on education, we'll be watching with interest, [SB 744](#) that directs the Department of Education to review state requirements for high school diploma and to report results of review to interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to education and to the State Board of Education. Suspends requirement of showing proficiency in Essential Learning Skills as condition of earning diploma during 2021-2022 or 2022-2023 school year. Prohibits State Board of Education from requiring for high school diploma that student show proficiency in any academic content area if student successfully completed credit requirements.
- Budget bills [SB 5514](#) on the State School Fund and [SB 5513](#) Department of Education are before the [Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education](#). These bills and accompanying agency presentations focus on Early Learning, K-12 District School

Funds, Youth Development Division and programs housed in the Oregon Department of Education.

Date, time and scheduled bills can be found here: [House Committee on Education](#), [Senate Committee on Education](#), [House Committee on Early Childhood](#), and [Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education](#)

## Other Insights on Education

In addition to watching hearings on OLIS and writing weekly Legislative Reports, we reach out (even during Covid isolation) to allies and coalitions also working on education improvements. If you have a passion for children, you may wish to research these links: [Our Children Oregon](#), [The Early Childhood Coalition](#), [Coalition of School Administrators](#), [Oregon School Board Administrators](#), [Oregon Education Association](#), Oregon [Department of Education](#), [Early Learning](#), [Higher Education HECC](#).

## Volunteer

Contact Chris Vogel at [chrisvogelvolunteerlwvor@gmail.com](mailto:chrisvogelvolunteerlwvor@gmail.com)