



VOICES UNITED.
OPPORTUNITY REIMAGINED.

March 16, 2021

House Committee on Education
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 2945

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We elevate data and lived experience to prioritize children and center communities. We continue to connect a community of 115 advocates, coalitions, and organizations through The Children's Agenda, a legislative agenda championing equitable state legislative policies and shared investments to improving the lives of Oregon's children and their families.

Addressing Racism in Public Schools is a priority on the 2021 Children's Agenda. HB 2945 is an important step towards achieving this goal as it would address Oregon's racial disparities in out-of-school suspensions or expulsions. This bill would require school districts to provide certain services to students who have been subject to out-of-school suspensions or expulsions and direct the Oregon Department of Education to provide support to school districts that disproportionately impose discipline on any student groups that have historically experienced academic disparities.

Receiving a quality education is one of the cornerstones of future success for children and youth in Oregon. Unfortunately, not all students can access the education they deserve due to deep inequities in our public education system. For generations, BIPOC communities in Oregon have felt the impacts of the school-to-prison pipeline, whereby students of color are funneled out of public schools and into the criminal justice system at disproportionate rates. During the 2018-2019 school year, disciplinary data from the Oregon Department of Education showed that **the percentages of Black students and Native student who received suspensions or expulsions were approximately twice that of White students.**ⁱ Research has shown that these disciplinary actions can

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



P.O. Box 14694
Portland, OR 97293
503.236.9754

ourchildrenoregon.org

severely hinder students' learning, contribute to racial disparities in educational achievement, and lead to poorer long-term outcomes for students of colorⁱⁱ

Oregon must address structural racism in our education system and ensure that every child and or youth has the opportunities they need to achieve their full potential. HB 2945 would help accomplish this by providing students who receive out-of-school suspensions or expulsions with the support they need to avoid falling behind. Among other things, it would ensure that students stay connected to behavioral and education supports, that all relevant classwork would be provided, and that those who qualify would continue receiving school meals. In addition, the bill would direct the Oregon Department of Education to provide support to school districts that disproportionately impose discipline on student groups that have experienced academic disparities. While there is still a long way to go, these are crucial and necessary steps towards eliminating the pervasive racial disparities in Oregon's schools.

We strongly urge you to join us in supporting HB 2954 and help all children and youth in Oregon receive the education they deserve.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Chis Coughlin, Policy, Advocacy, and Community Engagement Director
Peggy Ting, Policy Intern
Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2021 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-childrens-agenda

ⁱ Data from the Oregon Department of Education, 2018-2019 Discipline Media File.
<https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/School-Discipline.-Bullying.-Restraint-and-Seclusion.aspx>

ⁱⁱ Morris, Edward W., and Brea L. Perry. "The punishment gap: School suspension and racial disparities in achievement." *Social Problems* 63.1 (2016): 68-86.