



PRESS RELEASE

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Oregon House Passes Pioneering Ethnic Studies Bill

HB 2845 will establish statewide Ethnic Studies Standards for Oregon K-12 Schools

The Oregon House of Representatives today voted 39-15 to pass [House Bill 2845](#), creating the first set of comprehensive ethnic studies standards for K-12 schools.

The bill directs the Department of Education to convene a group of 13 individuals — each from a diverse background — who will advise the state on where “it fails to recognize the histories, contributions and perspectives of ethnic minorities and social minorities” by June 15, 2019.

The advisory group will submit a report to the Department recommending adjustments to statewide social studies standards for public school’s students in grades K-12. ODE will then consider those recommendations to adopt standards for ethnic studies by September 15, 2020.

Under HB 2845, the comprehensive definition of Ethnic Studies is “the histories and contributions of ethnic and social minorities,” including people who are Alaskan, Native American, people of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, Middle Eastern and Jewish descent. The bill also covers social minorities, including women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.

“It’s apparent that now more than ever, we need opportunities to really learn about and understand the experiences of our neighbors and their histories,” says Rep. Diego Hernandez (D-Portland), the bill’s chief sponsor. “By teaching the histories and contributions of all people, Ethnic Studies will open more pathways for teachers to engage with, relate to, and understand diverse students.”

Oregon is exploring innovative and effective ways to increase student attendance and graduation rates. By encouraging students and teachers to engage with different perspectives and histories, Ethnic Studies fosters critical thinking, cultural competency, and curiosity among Oregon students. Studies have shown that Ethnic Studies is incredibly effective in increasing student engagement, attendance and GPA.

“This bill could go a long way in keeping more students of ethnic and social minorities engaged and activated in school,” adds Rep. Hernandez. “This is one clear way to close the racial achievement gap in our schools.”

House Bill 2845 will now head to the Senate.

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