



OREGON SENATE DEMOCRATS

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Oregon Can Improve Equity in Education

SALEM – Today, the Oregon State Senate passed Senate Bill 232 and Senate Bill 236, two bills that seek to improve equity in education and confront systemic racism within Oregon’s public education system.

“In Oregon, our teaching staff does not reflect the diversity of our student population. We have known for a very long time the value to our students of color when they have teachers, leaders and positive relationships with adults who look like them – who have similar experiences and culture and who know first-hand what struggles they face,” said Senator Lew Frederick (D-N/NE Portland) who carried Senate Bill 232.

Oregon has made progress on educator equity since passage of the original Minority Teacher Act in 1991, which was renamed the Educator Equity Act in 2015. But in the 2018-2019 school year, nearly forty percent of Kindergarten through Grade 12 students were considered “ethnically diverse” as compared to only ten percent of teachers.

“When we increase the number of BIPOC teachers we see greater sustained attention in class and fewer dropouts across the student population. The policy does everyone good, and it deserves more in-depth analysis. We need to follow through on this commitment,” Senator Frederick added.

Senator Dembrow carried Senate Bill 236, a bill aimed specifically at interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline by reducing and eliminating suspension and expulsion in early care and education programs.

“National and state data show consistently that discipline against BIPOC kids and those with disabilities happens at disproportionate rates. It creates a distrust – and dislike – of the education system and it functions to push kids out,” said Senator Michael Dembrow (D-NE Portland) who chairs the Senate Committee on Education. “We know these policies do more harm than they do good and we can interrupt them, keep kids in school and offer greater opportunity for a bright future,” Senator Dembrow added.

Both bills passed with bipartisan support and now move to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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