

Transportation Justice Alliance

March 22, 2017

Representative Margaret Doherty
Chair, House Committee on Education
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Doherty and Members of Committee,

The Transportation Justice Alliance (TJA) expresses our strong support for HB 2693, the Oregon Youth Transit Initiative. TJA builds power with low-income communities and communities of color to ensure an affordable, equitable, and environmentally sustainable transportation system. We believe transportation is a human right, and a transportation system guided by environmental justice principles is essential to regional prosperity.

The Transportation Justice Alliance is a project of the Native American Youth and Family Center, OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, Community Cycling Center, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, ATU Local 757 and Latino Network. We are led by racial justice organizations and joined in solidarity by ally organizations The Street Trust, Oregon Walks, Oregon Food Bank, and 1000 Friends of Oregon. Our alliance prioritizes transportation policies that are of greatest benefit to underserved communities, and advances them in partnership with community groups, local jurisdictions and transportation agencies.

We believe that HB 2693 is the right tool at the right time to improve graduation rates in communities of color, who have long identified access to transit as a critical link to educational opportunities. HB 2693 will provide school district increase option and flexibility to address the most vulnerable students' transportation needs.

The benefits obtained from this bill would be significant: by supporting youth in having access to transportation for school and other opportunities in their communities, the state of Oregon has the opportunity to achieve multiple goals related to environmental justice, health, educational attainment, and the economy. We know that young people, especially those from lower income communities and communities of color, need as many options as possible to help them achieve success during a critical time in their lives. Many youth already access educational opportunities outside of the regular school day such as accessing classes and programming at local community colleges and continuing education and trade schools, and many youth are supplementing their household incomes by taking on a part time job.

TJA firmly believes that directly impacted communities should be listen to when it comes to the solutions that will impact their lives. Youth and students have shared the need for transit access and have voiced their support of HB 2693. We are enthusiastic in our support and look forward to working at the local level to assist with implementation after it's passage.

Sincerely,
Transportation Justice Alliance