



Senate Bill 13 – Native American Curriculum
Ways and Means Committee
June 20, 2017

Introduction:

Good morning Co-Chairs Monroe and Smith-Warner and members of the Committee. For the record, I am Cindy Hunt, Government and Legal Affairs Manager in the Oregon Department of Education. I am here today to provide testimony in support of SB 13.

Background:

The 1972 Indian Education Act was landmark legislation establishing a comprehensive approach to meeting the unique needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. It recognizes that American Indians have unique, educational and culturally-related academic needs. The Act covers pre-school to graduate-level education and reflects the diversity of government involvement in Indian education and focuses national attention on the educational needs of American Indian learners.

Yet Oregon continues to fail to meet the needs of its American Indian students as reflected by high dropout rates and chronic absenteeism. The state is missing a critical opportunity to fully leverage the strengths, assets, and contributions these students bring to their communities. The lack of accurate and complete curricula may contribute to the persistent achievement and opportunity gaps between American Indian and other students.

Objective 7 of the Native American/Alaska Native Education Plan states that “Every school district in Oregon implements (K-12) historically accurate, culturally embedded, place-based, contemporary, and developmentally appropriate American Indian / Alaska Native curriculum” Similar laws have been enacted by our neighboring states Washington, Montana, California, and Alaska.

American Indians lived in this great state long before it became Oregon. How can we teach youth about Oregon history without including the voice of Oregon’s American Indian peoples? Over the course of a year, The Department’s Indian Education Specialist has provided professional development to more than 1,500 educators around the state. One of the exercises offered during these trainings is asking participants to identify the nine federally recognized

tribes in Oregon. The exercise was revealing in that less than 1 percent were able to identify all nine, and more than 95 percent could identify only 1-2 tribes. This general lack of knowledge about Oregon tribes extends to curricula. On several occasions Department staff have reviewed curricula and found it to inaccurately represent American Indian peoples.

Legislation:

The Department includes some required teaching about American Indians in the Social Studies State Standards. SB 13 would create opportunities to expand the requirement to include other content areas.

Specifically, SB 13 directs the Department to do the following:

1. Make funds available during the 2017-18 academic year to each of Oregon's nine federally recognized tribal governments, for the creation of accurate place-based curriculum about each Oregon tribe. The Department will retain \$200,000 to hire a contractor to work with Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes and the Department's American Indian Alaska Native Advisory Panel to create Essential Understandings of Oregon Indians curriculum which will be aligned to state standards (Phase 1).
2. Offer professional development during the 2018-19 academic year to teachers and administrators on the Essential Understandings of Oregon Indians curriculum (Phase 2).
3. Require all school districts during the 2019-20 academic year to teach the Essential Understandings of Oregon Indians curriculum (Phase 3).

Fiscal:

If funded, SB 13 would appropriate \$2 million to the Department to create a Native American curriculum. Of those funds, \$1.8 million (\$200,000 per each tribe) will be made available to each Oregon federally recognized tribe to create individual place-based curriculum. ODE would retain \$200,000 to create Essential Understandings of Oregon Indians curriculum and provide professional development and technical support to districts. SB 13 will be implemented in the three distinct phases outlined above.

I am happy to take questions.