

Testimony on the importance of equity in the school funding formula

Oregon School Funding Task Force, March 21, 2014

Good Afternoon Chair Devlin and Task Force members,

For the Record, my name is Robin Morris Collin. I am the Norma J. Paulus Professor of Law at Willamette University College of Law in Salem, OR, and today I am representing the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs.

I am grateful to you for the opportunity to appear before you, and I thank you for your time.

Our Commissions have long advocated for equity in Oregon's educational investment. Equity is an essential leverage point in securing a prosperous future for all Oregonians. A few facts establish the importance of equity to our common future.

- 1) Oregon's demographic trends for the next 10 years show a significant increase in the age group of new retirees (age 65 – 74). As the "baby boom" generation retires in Oregon, our state's population will age.
- 2) Oregon's demographic trends for the next 10 years show an increase in ethnic groups that is faster than the national average. While Oregon is still among the least diverse states, this trend is rapidly increasing our state's diversity.

These demographic facts mean that an increasingly elderly white population will come to depend on an ethnically diverse young population to support our economic growth as they contribute

financially through their earnings taxes. The link between education and income earning ability has been thoroughly established. The more these young people can earn, the better off retirees and they will be. The ability of these young ethnically diverse people to contribute will be directly linked to their educational achievements.

For many white Oregonians, particularly for some of a certain advanced age, it is difficult to see or understand their personal stake in the success of “minority” students. These children look different from their own children on whom they may expect to lean in old age. Our public policy must take a longer view, and a broader view of the facts in order to provide for the Oregon we want in the future. Equity in education, now, is a critical leverage point to secure a prosperous future for all Oregonians.

Respectfully Submitted,

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