

Testimony for "Climate Change"
in Idaho Science Standards
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Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

My name is Therese Etoka, I'm a leader in the Climate Justice League and senior at Boise High. I am here today in support of the updated Science Content Standards, and I want to start by sharing a quote with you:

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively... to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education." (That's how MLKJ put it.)

The updated standards include references to a changing climate and biodiversity, two important subjects for any student, but especially those in Idaho. Learning about these subjects throughout school, has allowed me to deeply interact through scientific inquiry and critical analysis of the information. Students like myself have experienced teachers presenting us with the opportunity to learn about climate change. They don't impose their opinions, but instead let their students come to their own conclusions.

It's not the duty of our educators, or legislators for that matter, to restrict information from students, quite the opposite in fact. Educators have a duty to provide students all around the state with facts and a space for learning. Providing this exposure to a basic knowledge in every subject is critical, so that Idaho students may confront challenges and succeed in the real world.

I stand in front of you as a product of the Idaho education system, and more specifically as a member of the Boise School District community. But my personal story has also provided me with the perspective of what it's like to live in the absence of education.

I immigrated from the Democratic Republic of Congo. When you're living in a warzone, you don't continue going to school, instead your focus becomes how to stay alive. The DRC isn't known for education. In fact, a large majority of its "leaders" never even attended school. Without school, my country will continue to be in war. I tell you my story not to ask for sympathy, but so that you may understand. I am grateful to be here and to use my voice to speak in front of you today.

That is why I am empowered to speak for those who can't. Here, in the Boise School District, I am lucky to have the opportunity to learn and work with a variety of subjects, including climate change. Here in Boise, I've been provided with information from various sources and different backgrounds. Though other students around Idaho don't have the same type of access to information, especially if they're not taught these subjects in schools.

Why should I sit back and take what I have for granted?

I believe that my experience should be the standard experience for students all over Idaho. Every student, regardless of zip code, should be provided with the basic knowledge and understanding of real world problems like climate. I'm headed off to college this coming fall and I'm lucky to have received an education that prepares me for not just post-secondary education, but the world itself. It's not right to expect students to head off to post-secondary education without knowledge of current issues like climate change. It's putting us students at a disadvantage to not be knowledgeable on pressing issues that impact not just our world-but also our state.

I am asking that you listen- to the 19 members that developed, the State Board of Education that approved, your constituents and students from around this state- who have demonstrated overwhelming support for these standards-who have signed a petition in favor of these science standards (1000+ in three days).

I am asking that you exhibit leadership by giving everyone equal opportunity to learn, question, and grow by passing the updated Idaho Science Content Standards to ensure equitable access for science education throughout our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Therese Etoka