

MEASURE: HB 4162  
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**TO: House Committee on Business and Labor**  
**FR: Ellen Masterson, MSW, Field Education Director, School of Social Work, Portland State University, Member Oregon NASW**  
**DA: February 13, 2012**  
**RE: Support for HB 4162**

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Chair Garret, Chair Kennemer and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ellen Masterson and I am the Director of Field Education at the School of Social Work at Portland State University. I am also a member of the National Association of Social Workers, Oregon Chapter, representing 1,800 social workers in Oregon.

I thank you for this opportunity to testify. I strongly support HB 4162 because it will provide the same kinds of workplace protections for interns with regard to sexual harassment that other workers have.

In my position at PSU, I provide support and consultation to students about a wide range of situations they encounter in their internships. Sadly, I have had numerous examples of problems with sexual harassment of students over the years, but I'd like to share one example that is relevant to the bill being considered today. For obvious reasons, the situation will be presented in a way that protects the identity and confidentiality of those involved.

An agency employee made unwanted and repeated attempts to socialize with a student, during work as well as non-work hours. This included leaving multiple messages on the intern's personal cell and email accounts and interrupting the student during internship work to discuss the employee's attraction to the intern. The employee referred to their own power over the student in encouraging the student to accept social invitations. The student, not wanting to make a difficult situation worse, initially tried to ignore and minimize the unwanted advances. Eventually, the student discussed it with a faculty advisor who supported the student to share the concern with their agency supervisor. The School's Field Office intervened to modify the student's placement and spoke directly with the agency employee about the concern.

Field education is considered the signature training of social work education and is an integral part of every social worker's education. Social Work students provide a significant level of service to vulnerable populations in Oregon. Approximately 460 Portland State University social work students are doing internships this year, providing services with a monetary value of approximately \$3,500,000 in areas including: addiction, child welfare, mental health, criminal justice, developmental disabilities, domestic violence, family services, health care, homelessness, housing, schools, and services to immigrants/refugees, older adults, and veterans.

The PSU School of Social Work is one of many educational institutions that require internships as a significant component of preparation for professional practice. None of these programs wants its students to be vulnerable to workplace harassment.

**Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 4162. Again, this is an important bill and I ask you to support it.**