

February 3, 2012

TO: House Human Services Committee Members  
SUBJECT: Letter of support – HB 4077 – Healthy Teen Relationship Act

Dear Committee Members,  
Thank you for taking the time to hear the Healthy Teen Relationship Act, House Bill 4077. Since this bill was first introduced in the 2011 session, we have lost at least three more Oregon girls to relationship violence. And these tragedies are only the ones reported in the media. Recent research suggests that before exiting their teenage years, at least one in ten of our youth will experience some form of physical dating violence, and when emotional abuse is factored in, that percentage rises to more than one in three. This alarming trend shows no sign of stopping and the time to act is now.

Abusive relationships aren't just physical and sexual violence. Abusive relationships can include controlling behavior and emotional abuse that shape how teens view what is "normal" in a relationship for the rest of their lives. Unhealthy relationships can lead to domestic violence, incarceration, drug use, lower graduation rates, and many other outcomes that the state spends millions of dollars every year to address. House Bill 4077 recognizes that prevention and awareness are the most cost effective ways to combat these problems, and that in doing so, we can prevent many of the tragedies we hear about in the news. By teaching our students about the characteristics of healthy relationships, warning signs of abuse, and services available to those victimized by their partners, we empower young people to make safe and healthy relationship decisions and protect themselves from future abuse.

We are all sensitive to the burdens our schools face with growing class sizes, higher expectations and fewer resources with which to do it all. That is why our coalition has worked carefully and diligently with school districts, teachers and superintendents to craft language that will provide the greatest benefit to students while minimizing, at all opportunities, the financial and staff burdens such requirements may impose. We're confident we've found a way to empower students with knowledge while allowing districts the flexibility to incorporate these expectations within their existing programs.

Please join us in supporting healthy teen relationships and vote YES on House bill 4077.

