



Good afternoon Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Tricia Smith, and I represent the 20,000 members of Oregon School Employees Association. OSEA members include the classified employees working in our Head Start agencies, school districts, ESDs, and community colleges.

The FBI reports that 39 active shooter incidents occurred in education environments nationwide between 2000 and 2013, resulting in 117 individuals killed and 120 wounded. **The FBI also reports that school based attacks are occurring with increasing frequency — and account for some of the highest death tolls among all active shooter incidents between 2000 and 2013.** (*FBI, 2013*). Here in Oregon, we now know this all too well.

In a nationwide survey of high-school students, about 6% reported not going to school on one or more days in the 30 days preceding the survey because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to and from school. (*CDC, 2010*). Students can not learn when they are not in school, or when they are consumed by fear.

While some acts of violence are random in nature, studies show most active shooters pre-plan their acts of violence and have told their plans to someone within their peer group.

In the aftermath of shootings here in Oregon, the 77th Legislative Assembly recognized that our schools and emergency personnel do not have adequate resources in place to protect students from these tragedies. HB 4087 was passed, establishing the Oregon Task Force on School Safety to develop an rfp for development of a statewide database of school floor plans and to make other recommendations.

OSEA member Sue Graves from Lincoln County School District has been working as the school representative on a local threat assessment team for years, and lent her expertise to this effort as a member of the task force. You have been presented this report, and we support all of its recommendations.

The task force recommendations are:

1. **Develop a statewide school floor plan database** so police and fire personnel can access floor plans before responding to life-threatening events at schools, potentially decreasing response time and improving safety for first responders, educators and students.
2. **Standardize terminology** for school emergency management and drills so that no matter where you live in the state, your school is following a similar protocol.
3. **Establish a statewide tip line** where students, parents, and others can anonymously report information on potential threats. The tip line can also serve as an avenue for youth seeking help for self-harm and other issues.
4. **Create a statewide threat assessment system** to provide a consistent, structured approach to identify, evaluate and support students who present a potential threat to themselves or others.

The first two recommendations will assist emergency responders when an active shooter situation is in progress.

The second two recommendations, establishing a statewide tip line and local threat assessment are meant to prevent such a situation from happening in the first place. I wish to focus my remarks here.

HB 4075 establishes and funds recommendation number 3, the statewide tip line.

As I mentioned, OSEA supports all of the recommendations, including this one. However, our support for the tip line can only exist if it is coupled with recommendation number 4, the creation of a statewide threat assessment system.

A tip line can only be effective in reducing potential threats if it is coupled with the establishment of threat assessment teams at the local level to receive the tip, evaluate whether it is a serious threat for which action must be taken, and identifying what action is appropriate.

The FBI has identified "a number of potential school shootings that were prevented because students reported a threat to authorities that was investigated and determined to be serious. Based on these observations, **the FBI and Secret Service both recommended that schools adopt a threat assessment approach to prevent targeted acts of violence.**" (*O'Toole, 2000; Vossekul, 2002*)

Threat assessment continues to be one of the most effective ways school districts, law enforcement and mental health professionals can reduce the likelihood of an active shooter situation in a school environment.

Threat assessment requires a coordinated team effort by local officials with the expertise and training necessary to effectively evaluate a potential threat and understand what the appropriate response is that should be taken. It is a collaborative specialty that doesn't exist at the local level unless it is deliberately and thoughtfully put in place.

We are very concerned that HB 4075 by itself will not be effective in preventing future school violence because it is not coupled with the establishment of threat assessment teams at the local level. The effectiveness of the tip line in providing information to those in the right place and with the expertise necessary to prevent a school shooting will be severely limited. Who will receive the tips? If there is someone at the local level that receives the information, will they have the training and expertise to know what to do with the information? What happens to the tip – and the potentially dangerous person the tip is about -- if the local community does not know how to respond?

A tip line without trained experts at the local level ready to receive those tips, evaluate them and know what action is appropriate, could have the unintended consequence of leading the concerned caller to think that officials will act on the information – when that might not be the case at all. How would the public feel if, in the aftermath of the next school shooting it was revealed that a tip came into the tip line about the shooter, but preventive action was not taken because the community lacked a threat assessment team with the training and expertise to handle the situation safely and appropriately?

We ask that you amend HB 4075 to add establishment of a statewide threat assessment system to receive the information from the tip line and other sources about potentially violent persons who may be planning a mass attack on one of our schools. We know this approach will prevent such tragedies in the future.

Finally, we suggest that it might be very useful to keep the task force in place to assist state policy makers and local emergency responders and school personnel in the implementation of these recommendations.