

Chair Roblan, Vice Chair Linthicum, and members of the committee:

My name is Erica Rothman, and I am the Title IX Co-Coordinator at Portland Community College. I'm here to discuss how the proposed bill might affect community colleges.

PCC is the largest public college in Oregon by far, serving more than 80,000 students, faculty and staff. But Oregon is home to a number of smaller community colleges whose impact is no less profound. Community colleges are a gateway for many first generation college students. Community colleges provide an affordable alternative to a traditional four-year institution with certification and vocational programs. Community colleges also offer a stepping stone with transfer degrees. And, with Oregon Promise ramping up, that stepping stone is now afforded to more Oregonians than ever before.

Because we are a point of entry into the world of higher education, we are at a unique crossroads between the needs of traditional four year institutions, K-12 institutions and the greater workforce. We serve a number of populations who are typically vulnerable to sexual misconduct – students aged 16-24, students with disabilities, students of color, immigrant and other students with possible language barriers. Our diversity is our strength. Our diversity also overlaps with identities and factors known to increase risk of sexual assault or other misconduct. As such, our student support services must be comprehensive when it comes to student sexual safety and education about healthy relationships.

We are uniquely situated to address some of these concerns, but we are also struggling to allocate the resources we need to respond to the broad array of Title IX-related concerns we face. At PCC, I'm very fortunate to have some helping hands – a team, really. Some of my colleagues at smaller community colleges are not so fortunate. An HR director will also be the sole Title IX administrator. Indeed, all of my helping hands have other roles in the college. We need as much as we can get in the way of support and resources for sexual misconduct, sex education, and technical assistance.

Technical assistance in particular has been immeasurably helpful in navigating the overlay between a number of Federal, state and local guidelines. The conflicts of law that arise in this field are complex. Having a savvy legal technician in Salem who can help untangle the interstices of this legal arena would be very beneficial to me and my community college colleagues. And clear policy and procedure ultimately benefits our students. Our students need to know their rights, responsibilities and resources on our campuses. As the higher ed legal landscape gets more complex, so too do the needs of our students.

I support this bill. Thank you.