



Oregon School Employees Association

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March 6, 2017

Senator Sara Gelser, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services
State Capitol - 900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 363

Hello Chair Gelser and members of the committee, my name is Monica McCanna I started working as a life skills paraprofessional about 13 years with the Harney County School District. I am here today in support of Senate Bill 363.

As a zone director on the Oregon School Employees Association's Board, I have had many opportunities to speak to other members who work in schools including: bus drivers, secretaries and other paraprofessionals who have similar stories. My story is repeated daily across the state, it isn't unique, but it shouldn't be ignored.

I started working with a student who was diagnosed with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) on was an IEP. This student was on the highest spectrum of TBI, with PTSD and a victim of sexual abuse creating a complicated situation that my district had never dealt with before. He is a big kid at 250 pounds and over 6 feet tall. I learned the hard way that saying NO would trigger him. When triggered he would step on my feet, kick at my shins, pinch, pull hair, spit, bite, punch and poke me with sharp pencils. He stepped and stomped on my feet so many times over the years that I have ingrown toenails on my big toes. Many times I was grabbed and even sexually assaulted. I was put in headlocks so he could hug me, smell my hair and kiss it.

He was always truly sorry after the incidents and felt badly about himself. He did not want to be like this. I had to write him up per policy and because it was supposed to help him learn. But it didn't. I cared about the student and his success, but I just couldn't do it anymore. Being that he was close to 18 years old it was more and more difficult, because he was so strong. It took me asking three times to be reassigned in writing to the school board before my request was granted. The emotional and physical toll this has taken on me is immense. I still have nightmares. I also live with extreme guilt because after I left, the student hurt two other paraprofessionals so bad they both have permanent shoulder damage.

We all need more access to mental health professionals to meet our student's needs. We all need more diverse training. We all need better reporting. We all need to be safe. In order for this to happen we need your help.

Thank you,

Monica McCanna
Oregon School Employees Association Zone VI Director
OSEA Harney County Chapter 75 President