

3/7/2017

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of House Bill 2649. I strongly ask that you support this bill.

Currently, every school district is required by state law to have a district policy on bullying and harassment, including an internal procedure for reporting bullying and harassment complaints. Just within the last several years, a solid majority of districts are finally in compliance with that portion of the law. However, in some cases, having a policy adopted and on the books does not guarantee that it is being followed appropriately. This bill establishes a process where a student or parent may file a complaint with the Department of Education claiming that the anti-bullying policy was not applied as required by state law – but only after the student or parent has fully exhausted the district complaint process and notified the district of their intent to file with the state.

This change should be helpful for all parties involved. For students and parents of students who feel they have not received the proper treatment, this gives them a critical opportunity for reconciliation without the student needing to drop out or change schools. For districts and administrators, it allows a third, neutral party (the Department of Education) to examine their application of policy and either affirm their decision or help them craft a workable solution. Unfortunately, in the status quo, the Department of Education has no ability or authority to be involved, meaning that a student or parent's only avenue to address a situation in which they feel they have not been treated fairly is to drop out, change schools, or file a lawsuit against the district – a big jump and not helpful for any party involved.

As the national climate worsens and more students report being bullied, this bill is a relatively inexpensive investment in the wellbeing of Oregon's students, and it's an easy action to help ensure every child is receiving the safe access to an education that they are entitled to.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin Bowman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Ben Bowman  
Tigard, Oregon