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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

DISTRICT 41
MULTNOMAH AND CLACKAMAS COUNTIES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 8, 2017

Chair Doherty, Vice Chair Hernandez, Vice Chair Wilson, members of the committee:

We all know that children are our future, and that their success is vital to our state's prosperity. In order for our children to succeed, it is imperative that we curate healthy learning environments that facilitate this success.

I am concerned with the extremely high national rate of bullying in our schools. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, 1 in 3 students have experienced bullying or harassment in their designated learning environments.

Oregon's Department of Education reported that in the 2015-2016 school year there were over 8,400 incidents reported of students experiencing some type of bullying in their schools, ranging from threats, intimidation, battery, sexual battery, harassment, sexual harassment, and even kidnapping.

The landscape of student harassment, particularly of racial and religious minorities, has become increasingly bleak since the election of President Trump in November. Just yesterday, Lake Oswego High School students organized a walkout due to incidents of racist graffiti in their school bathrooms. Students are stepping up because they know this is wrong. I agree.

The innumerable negative effects that bullying has on our children are hampering their ability to succeed in the classroom. The Center for Disease Control says that students who experience bullying are at risk for poor school performance, sleep difficulties, anxiety, depression, suicide and other mental health and behavior problems. It's hard to go to school if you don't want to be there because someone is making your life miserable. Students who engage in bullying behavior are also at greater risk for mental health and behavior problems, as well as academic problems, substance abuse, and violent behavior later in adolescence.

We have to intervene.

We may not know what the best vehicle for curbing bullying is, but we must have an avenue for data collection. The federal government began collecting data about bullying in 2005, and it's time for Oregon to catch up. When my staff asked the Oregon Department of Education for the bullying stats included in my testimony and submitted to OLIS, they weren't sure that they collected this information. Let's change that.

To improve our graduation rates, attendance rates, and education outcomes, we have to make school a place where Oregon children want to be. Taking bullying seriously enough to collect data about it is a step in the right direction.

Thank you, members of the committee, for hearing this bill.

Representative Karin Power

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Incident Counts in Oregon School Districts

	2011-12	2013-14	2015-16
Battery	1873	1879	2450
Sexual Battery	6	11	*
Harassment	5504	3736	2902
Sexual Harassment	1307	1013	991
Kidnapping	*	*	*
Threats/Intimidation	3156	2238	2128

*incident count is less than 6

Source: Oregon Department of Education