



Date: March 15, 2017
To: Senate Judiciary Committee, Chair Prozanski and Members
From: Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations
RE: ***SB 356 [Bias Crimes]***

On behalf of OEA's 44,000 members in public schools from pre-schools through community colleges, it is my honor to testify in support of SB 356, which would ensure that crimes against protected-class individuals **by** other individuals be charged as bias crimes. Given that our educators have reported a surge of such incidents, particularly in the months since the November 2016 General Election, we have a keen interest in improving Oregon's laws in this regard.

We are grateful to Sen. Frederick for calling these crimes what they are, more accurately: intended to intimidate, yes, but derived of a bias against a person or group of people for their immutable characteristics. We also appreciate that it is important that the charge be available to use against individuals who commit these crimes, rather than only if perpetrated as group actions. Crimes borne of hatred may be perpetrated by one or many.

The website ***Community Matters*** wrote last month:

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), there were 867 cases of hateful harassment or intimidation in the United States in the 10 days after the November 8 election. This escalation in reported incidents has primarily targeted people of color, Muslims, immigrants, the LGBT community and women. Young people have also interpreted the new order as license to plaster bathroom walls and cafeterias with swastikas, harass women wearing hijabs and sexually assault female classmates in broad daylight. ...Regardless of who is demeaning, vilifying or hurting whom, it's clear that our children have not gone unscathed in the current political climate. Bullying and cyber-bullying, already a major problem in America's schools, have now been exacerbated by an elevated awareness in student's minds of homophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racism, misogyny and xenophobia. Just like the rest of us, young people are trying to make sense of what they've heard and seen in the "adult world", and they're acting out from a place of confusion, frustration, fear and heightened stress.
[\[http://community-matters.org/blog/post/what-to-do-about-hate-crimes-in-our-schools\]](http://community-matters.org/blog/post/what-to-do-about-hate-crimes-in-our-schools)

Fully a third of these crimes happened in school and post-secondary education settings. In Oregon, we began hearing of incidents of bullying, harassment, and crimes of intimidation surrounding the rancorous election season, so OEA developed a reporting site on its website to track such events in the school setting. This is a first for our association, prompted by the need to bear witness to the climate in which we increasingly find ourselves, and one our students are experiencing. Some examples:

- A group of their student fans said racist & sexist things at our girls (varsity players, JV players, and managers), made horrible motions toward them (including the middle finger), and continued to harass them after the game and in the parking lot. My girls were crying, yelling, etc... just very, very upset. It was an absolutely terrible evening for them.
- A white teacher at our middle school was called a "n*****" A 4th grade white boy at (Name Withheld) told two Latinx students "shouldn't you be home packing your bags?" Some staff members who are women of color feel like school isn't a safe place for them.
- I have received multiple reports from students' families that their relatives, parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and other people who provide support are afraid to leave their homes over fear of deportation.
- My daughter has endured bullying/sexual harassment for the past three years in middle school. In November of this year, she received a disgusting message in google docs that was major sexual harassment.

Clearly, we have much work to do to create a safer world. It is our hope that this bill is one small step in the right direction. Please lend your support to SB 356. Thank you.