



March 22, 2017

Dear Chair Doherty and members of the House Committee on Education,

On behalf of the Oregon chapters of the National Organization for Women (NOW), we write today to express our strong support for House Bill 2649, which will give us better tools for ending harassment and bullying for all students in Oregon. As the grassroots arm of the women's movement, the National Organization for Women is dedicated to a multi-issue and multi-strategy approach to women's rights. NOW's purpose is to take action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. This testimony is submitted on behalf of the state chapter, Oregon NOW, and four local chapters from across Oregon: Central Oregon Coast NOW, Greater Portland NOW, High Desert NOW, and South Willamette Valley NOW.

Oregon already has taken important steps to ensure student safety and to promote healthy learning environments, and HB 2649 builds on that strong track record. It creates a process that allows individuals (parents or students) to file a complaint against a district for not following their existing state-mandated bullying and harassment policy, an important remedy to ensure that state law and district policy is being properly followed, and that all students are receiving the protections to which they are entitled.

HB 2649 also requires the Oregon Department of Education to track when perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity is involved in a discipline-related incident. Currently, age and ethnicity are captured, but not sexual orientation or gender identity. Knowing that LGBTQIA students are particularly vulnerable to bullying and harassment, collecting this data is important for understanding the scope of the problem.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony support of House Bill 2649. We urge your yes vote.

Sincerely,

*Lisa Frack for the Oregon state chapter of the National Organization for Women (Oregon NOW)*

*Sheila Swinford for Central Oregon Coast NOW*

*Bud Feules for Greater Portland NOW*

*TeriAnn Mason for High Desert NOW*

*Laurie Notaro for South Willamette Valley NOW*