

# Oregon Task Force on School Safety

as established by House Bill 4087 during the 77th Oregon Legislative Assembly



**To:** Members of the Senate Committee on Education

**From:** Superintendent Dave Novotney, Ph.D., Willamette Education Service District  
Oregon Association of Education Service Districts  
Co-Chair, Oregon Task Force on School Safety

Clackamas County Sheriff Craig Roberts  
Oregon State Sheriffs' Association  
Chair, Oregon Task Force on School Safety

**Date:** February 16, 2017

**Re:** Testimony in Support of SB 414

Dear Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

In its report to the Oregon Legislature in 2015, the Oregon Task Force on School Safety identified two key recommendations as critical next steps for improving safety in Oregon schools: (1) develop a statewide school safety tip line to allow students, staff and others to confidentially report threats to student safety, and (2) develop a statewide student threat assessment system to help schools respond effectively to those tips. We believe these two systems are inextricably connected and, working together, they will save lives.

We are pleased to report that the Task Force's first recommendation has been successfully implemented. On January 31, 2017, the Oregon State Police launched the statewide school safety tip line (known as SafeOregon) and students are already using the system. With your support of SB 414 we can take the next critical step toward safer schools by developing a statewide student threat assessment system to help schools respond effectively to threats of aggression and suicide risk.

A copy of the proposal, ***A Statewide Threat Assessment System for Oregon Public Schools***, is included with this letter. The concept for SB 414 was developed from this proposal. The system envisions multiple regions across the state with one or more Regional Threat Assessment Specialists assigned to each area. The Specialists would be responsible for providing threat assessment training and support to the schools in

their region, coordinate Level 2 threat assessments, provide consultation with school and community based threat assessment teams and provide regional oversight to ensure the system is implemented with fidelity. Conceptually, oversight of the system is assigned to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), who may contract with Oregon's education service districts to hire and supervise these Specialists. The Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Salam Noor, supports this concept as a valuable early intervention tool for Oregon schools.

The Student Threat Assessment System employs a two-tiered approach for assessing the level of risk posed by a situation involving one or more students. Level 1 of the model is a school-based team comprised of a school administrator, a counselor or mental health professional and a local law enforcement officer. This team helps the school understand the threat, evaluate student risk, and identify resources available to address the situation. If the Level 1 team determines additional assessment is needed or the school lacks resources to effectively address the threat, a community-based multi-disciplinary team is activated to conduct a Level 2 assessment and consult on community resources. This model has been used by the Salem-Keizer School District for the past 16 years, and is recognized as a national model for student threat assessment.

Research informs our belief that threat assessment is a proven strategy that can help prevent acts of violence in schools and reduce youth suicides. Oregon schools need both a tip line and a student threat assessment system working to support each other—a system to report threats and a system that helps schools respond to decrease risk of harm and ensure needed support. Together, these two systems create a safer environment that supports teaching and learning.

We look forward to discussing the statewide student threat assessment proposal with you and how SB 414 will strengthen safety in Oregon schools.

On behalf of the Oregon Task Force on School Safety, we urge your support of SB 414.

**Enclosure(s):** *A Statewide Threat Assessment System for Oregon Public Schools*