



February 14, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to strongly support the passage of SB318. Raphael House of Portland, a multi-faceted domestic violence agency, has been working with schools for over 10 years to help create a culture where people feel safe, happy, and healthy in their personal relationships as well as their communities. Our Prevention Education Program presents in high school and middle school health classrooms throughout the Tri-County area. Our curriculum brings awareness around issues of domestic/dating/intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and rape.

We know that not enough is currently done to help students talk about and understand such things as relationship dynamics and consent. If clear opportunities are not given and institutions do not make these issues a priority, then people will have a hard time practicing relationships in a safe way. Furthermore, we also know that talking about sex and sexuality in a supportive and safe environment is fundamental to preventing sexual violence. For example, talking about what consent is and isn't will help prevent sexual assault and rape.

The Healthy Teen Relationship Act, HTRA, (HB4077) requires all school districts to adopt a policy that supports age-appropriate education about teen dating violence into new or existing training programs for students in grades 7-12. Erin's Law (SB 856) additionally requires public schools from K-12 to include sexual abuse prevention education.

Schools across Oregon lack the infrastructure and support to fully implement effective prevention efforts. Our Prevention Education Program is offered as a free community service to the local school districts and could benefit from the systemic support of a funded FTE in the Oregon Department of Education.

Passing this bill will not only show that we as a state are, in fact, taking concrete steps to help make our communities safer but will also provide the necessary support to school staff and other agencies involved in this work.

Thank you,

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