



OREGON

**SCHOOL-BASED  
HEALTH ALLIANCE**

Senate Committee on Education  
Hearing Room C  
900 Court St. NE,  
Salem Oregon 97301

February 16, 2017

RE: Support for Senate Bill 318

Chair Roblan, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee,

Sexual violence is preventable. With strong policy, advocacy and access to education and support for healthy relationships, sexual violence is prevented. And Oregon boasts some of the best, most comprehensive policies and some of the most passionate advocates for healthy relationships in the country. We have the necessary prevention elements to put our state ahead of the curve when it comes to preventing violence and ensuring all young people have access to education and support for healthy relationships. However, what is lacking here, despite our best intentions, are the resources for infrastructure to ensure all young people have equal and equitable access to violence prevention and healthy relationships promotion support across the state.

Although teaching about consent, communication, respect, and trust within interpersonal relationships are included as primary outcomes within Oregon's Standards and Benchmarks for Health Education, the Oregon Department of Education is currently lacking the capacity to ensure standardized implementation across the state. This is why I support Senate Bill 318.

In my ten years teaching about healthy relationships and violence prevention in high schools and middle schools, I saw that every teacher I worked with used a different curriculum, a different program, or a different method for teaching the young people in their community. Now in my current role as Program Manager with the Oregon School-Based Health Alliance, I am seeing how true this is across the state. It is true that every community has different needs in addressing what it means to practice a healthy relationship and prevent violence—however, I've witnessed a lack of training, technical assistance, and support for educators, administrators, and healthcare providers about how to talk to youth about healthy relationships and prevent violence. Although we have the policies and passion, we have not, as a state, made the investment in necessary infrastructure to support Oregon's young people to have healthier relationships.

Often, responsibility for implementation in schools falls on community nonprofits, which tend to be chronically underfunded. Currently, I distribute small grants to school-based health centers across the state to implement projects to promote healthy relationships in their communities. It's up to me to

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provide funds, training, and infrastructure to support these efforts. Underfunded, already overworked domestic and sexual violence programs are implementing education in high schools and middle schools to help fill the gap because many educators across the state feel unprepared and unable to talk about dating and sexual violence prevention with the young people they teach. These programs are doing effective and important work in their communities, but this model, without any kind of systemization and accountability, is unsustainable.

The Oregon Department of Education has a long history of providing excellent training, technical assistance, and support to Oregon's educators. Currently, though, they lack the capacity to be able to support the implementation of necessary health promotion and violence prevention policies. This bill will fill that gap.

I urge you to pass Senate Bill 318. Preventing sexual violence in Oregon depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Megan Kovacs  
Program Manager  
Oregon School-Based Health Alliance