

Chair Doherty, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 4013. My name is Caroline Fenn, Portland, Oregon. I speak as an education advocate and activist.

The purpose of HB 4013 is to remove Secretary of State Dennis Richardson's non-voting appointee to the State Board of Education, citizen Kim Sordyl. The bill requires the State Treasurer and Secretary of State to appoint their deputies and declares a state of emergency so that the bill would take effect immediately. There is no emergency. There is only a desire to silence Kim Sordyl.

It is a bad idea to enact legislation directed at an individual. It is a bad idea for legislatures to be in the business of silencing citizens. This kind of activity is called a witch-hunt and we have seen it before in some of the darkest days of our nation's history. The silencing of citizens by those in power undermines democracy itself. If passed, this bill could well have a chilling effect on citizens' willingness to serve in a public capacity and to speak truth to power.

Kim Sordyl is outspoken, laser focused on students and the law and not always nice. She does not prioritize tact and she is willing to make people uncomfortable in her pursuit of justice. I can understand that those she has challenged would delight in finding a way to silence her, but the legislature would be wrong to help them. Many children and families in Portland and elsewhere have relied on Kim's help in getting their districts and the state to follow the law. She has exposed unsavory and illegal school and district practices that needed to be stopped. She is a public whistleblower and we need more people like her in public service.

Kim has continued to keep the focus on students in her role as a non-voting member of the State Board of Education. That is not cause to declare a state of emergency, nor does it justify passing a law to get her removed. The State Board of Education is full of private citizens most of whom are appointed by the governor. There is literally no rationale for legislating a different set of rules for the State Treasurer and Secretary of State. Our system of government should be robust enough that it can withstand sharp words and frank debate. I hope you will not let HB 4013 out of committee.