



Testimony in support of HB 4150
Senate Committee on Education
February 26, 2018, HR C, at 1pm

Chair Senator Roblan, Vice-Chair Senator Linthicum, and Senators Bentz, Dembrow, Gelser, Hass and Thomsen,

At the request of the Chairs of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions and as Chair of the Oregon Commission for Women, I respectfully urge you to support HB 4150, which ensures that student victims of sexual harassment in K-12 districts are provided information regarding the outcome of the investigation into their complaint. I am also submitting this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Commissions on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, Black Affairs, and Hispanic Affairs, each of which supports HB 4150 as an issue of intersectional importance to their constituent communities.

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions are committed to the just and equitable treatment of students as they work their way through the K-12 system. HB 4150 moves us a step closer to this goal. This bill will ensure that student sexual harassment victims are provided the information necessary to make informed decisions regarding their complaint.

ORS 342.704 states that the school district will investigate a complaint filed by a K-12 student, when the complaint alleges sexual harassment perpetrated by staff or by another student. The text says that the student and their parent(s) will be notified when the investigation is concluded. HB 4150 acknowledges that when a student files a complaint, particularly one as significant and difficult as a sexual harassment claim against a school staff member or another student, the student should receive more than notice that the investigation has concluded. The student deserves to know whether the investigation determined a violation occurred and what actions, if any, the school district is planning to take to prevent a recurrence of the situation. It should be noted that there is clear racial bias in how students are disciplined and how cases are dealt with in K-12 schools.

Sexual harassment is endemic in our society. Schools should be a place where students are able to learn without fear of harassment; yet studies show this is not the case. A 2011 study found that nearly half (48 percent) of students surveyed (7-12 grades) experienced some form of sexual harassment in the 2010-11 school year.¹ In addition, one-third of girls (33 percent) and approximately one-quarter of boys (24 percent) said they had observed sexual harassment at their school in the same time period. For something so prevalent, reports of these incidents are rare. Of those who experienced sexual harassment, only 9 percent reported the incident to an adult at

OR Commission for Women

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¹ <https://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/Crossing-the-Line-Sexual-Harassment-at-School.pdf>

school.² Oregon schools must cultivate a culture where students feel safe reporting such incidents. And those students who report an incident deserve a system they can trust to provide more specific information regarding the conclusion of their complaint.

We strongly urge Senate Committee on Education to support HB 4150.

Sincerely,



Barbara Spencer, Chair, Oregon Commission for Women



Chanpone Sinlapasai, Chair,
Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific
Islander Affairs



James Morris, Chair
Oregon Commission on Black Affairs



Alberto Moreno, Chair,
Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs

² Ibid.