

Dear Sen. Knopp and Rep. Buehler:

I am writing in support of the proposed amendment to legislation currently before the legislature to make threatening a school attack a felony rather than a misdemeanor. In the aftermath of the horrific school shooting in Florida, the Bend-La Pine School District and local enforcement agencies have investigated multiple threats against our schools. Last week, an arrest of a student was made for disorderly conduct. While no one solution exists to addressing school safety, I believe that strengthening the state law against school threats will be a deterrent to future threats. Based on my experience, local law enforcement is very responsive to the needs of our school community and they should have every legal tool available to them to keep our children safe.

I recognize time is short during the current legislative session. But given the circumstances in Bend, and the unsettled aftermath of the Florida school shooting, I am hopeful that legislators from both parties will recognize the urgency and value of passing this legislation before you adjourn. As a parent of three kids in Bend-La Pine schools and as a school board member, I am proud of the coordinated commitment of local administrators, teachers, parents, students and law enforcement in working to ensure our schools and children are safe. I urge you and your colleagues to join this effort and approve this amendment.

Thank you both for your past, present and future leadership.

Cheri Helt