

Oregon State Senate
Ref: HB-4093

Chair Taylor, Members of the Committee:

My name is Kim Taylor, I'm a Mom of a former WHL player. Our story until recently has been a private one, and it would have been a lot easier to keep it that way. But my son and I have decided to go public with our story and be a voice for those who fear retribution for doing so. We experienced this same fear while my son was still in the league and want to take this opportunity to speak up for those that may not feel like they can right now. I can honestly say I have no ulterior motive, my only concern is about the health and wellbeing of these young hockey players. The league offers tremendous growth opportunities for players, but the reality is very few go on to make a living from hockey. Teams enrich their communities and offer a high level of great competitive hockey for its fans. But Teams need to do a better job of looking out for the boys that are entrusted to them. Players leave all they have ever known behind. Their homes, families, friends, and schools to chase and pursue their dream of being professional hockey players. Many are signing contracts as early as 15 and entering the WHL at 16 and 17 years of age. Still minors. Over 90% of the players are teenagers. As a parent I entrusted the WHL with my most precious commodity my teenage son. I believed the WHL when they said they would develop him not only as hockey player but as up standing citizen and young men. We entrusted the community as well. Not to just rally for them at games but stand behind them as gate keepers so to speak. Holding the teams accountable to the standards they say they have set. But we have come to know all too well a public persona can be very different from what really happens behind closed doors. And isn't that what matters most. Teams don't operate as if they're nonprofits, they treat these kids as if they're running big business. It's a multi-million dollar for profit business. Generated off the talent of these young men and boys.

Although we were hopeful our son might have the opportunity to move on to the next level, we knew the numbers and that the odds were against him. But what we weren't prepared for was the mental abuse that he and many faced. There is still an old school hockey mentality. What doesn't make them stronger just might break them. If a player breaks or the team decides they no longer require your services, they reassign or cut you. Fair enough but do so in a humane way. Teams have no exit plans or strategies in place and are not required to do so. All too often it's done in a back room leaving the player dazed and distraught. This occurrence is so common there is even a term for it. "The garbage bag treatment." No phone calls to a parent, agent, or billet family to ensure players will have the proper support system needed during this difficult time. Unfortunately, this was the case for Terry Trafford of the Saginaw Spirit. Terry's experience was so devastating for him he elected to take his own life.

In my son's case he learned the hard way you don't ask for anything let alone a trade. A couple of weeks later he was called off the bus just before leaving on a road trip. The GM proceeded to tell him he would not be going with the team. Garrett thought his trade had come in, but they were reassigning him. In simple terms he was being cut and sent down. They chose to break the news by devastating and humiliating him while all his teammates watched. Garrett had to off load many hockey bags from the bus until he found his own. Then step back onto the bus to retrieve his suit bag, everyone watching and asking what was going on. There was a clear message of intimidation being sent to the rest of the team. I didn't receive a phone call from the team, I received a phone call from a teammates Dad. Who told me his son had texted him from the bus and was upset about what just went down with Garrett. He told me I better get up there as soon as possible that my son was going to need me. I was in California

my teenage son was in Canada and wasn't answering his phone. It was very unsettling. The team initially held on to Garrett's rights. Once released, he was picked up by another WHL team. Unfortunately, the damage had been done. Garrett was now experiencing panic attacks. His anxiety kept building and manifested into a condition called OCD. He was unable to rebound from his experiences. Garrett considered himself damaged goods and was taught by his previous experience to keep quiet. He struggled just to get through the day let alone play hockey the rest of the season.

Once home things continued to worsen and we ended up sending Garrett to the OCD Institute for 72 days. It was his father's health insurance that picked up a majority of the bill. What happens to players who don't have the same advantage.

Let's ensure all players are treated humanely. That they receive proper health and dental care for injuries received while playing for their teams. That they are able to claim and receive their **"guaranteed"** scholarship packages promised to them.

Please oppose HB 4093. These kids need every avenue possible to appeal their treatment if they are brave enough to speak up.

Thank you,
Kim Taylor
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