

Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Laura Hanson and I am Senator Sara Gelser's Chief of Staff. Though I am here to today as a private citizen to testify on SB 744 and HB 2859.

I am in a unique position to provide feedback to this committee because not only do I work in this building, but I am a survivor of sexual violence who reported her experience to her institution and whose safety and rights were violated by the institution in their response.

There have been several stories written about my experience, which I am including in my written testimony for the record: <https://www.eugeneweekly.com/2015/05/28/dragged-through-the-mud/>
<https://www.propublica.org/article/after-sexual-assault-woman-says-university-lawyers-counseling-records>
<https://www.propublica.org/article/when-students-become-patients-privacy-suffers>

In January 2013, I was roofied and raped by the president of a fraternity at the University of Oregon. Like so many survivors before me, in the wake of my experience, I struggled with putting a name to what happened to me. By the time I came to terms with what had happened to me, I resolved to share my experience with leadership in Greek Life in the hopes that no one else would be raped or abused by him. However, I can say today without hesitation that the process the University put me through to "protect" me was so much worse than the initial assault.

My only goal in telling people in a position of power in my community about what happened to me was for them to use their position of authority to warn other students to not go to parties with that fraternity. I didn't want what happened to me to happen to other women.

Instead, I was dragged through months of meetings with University of Oregon officials who told me I was legally required to tell my story over and over and over again because they knew my name and they knew my rapist's name. I had to describe waking up to being raped to five or ten different university employees. I was told that I had to attend those meetings and jump through those hoops in order for my story to be heard, for my complaint to be processed. I was numb and tired and sad but I was committed to jumping through those hoops because I refused to let his abuse continue.

Instead, my reputation was irreparably harmed. Everyone in my community knew about what I "alleged" had happened, but because the university insisted that the process be secret and private, my community thought that the university didn't substantiate my claims. Because of their anonymous process, my community saw a woman crying rape and a rapist continuing his education and graduating without incident.

I am concerned that what you are proposing in these bills is adding layers of bureaucracy and hoops for victims and survivors to jump through when they have already been abused or harassed. In my experience, the bureaucratic hoops were more harmful than the initial trauma.

From my perspective, there doesn't need to be an office or board or committee to hear and respond to harassment in this building. We should just be able to go to our human resources department, share our experience and know that the harassment will stop. By trying to complicate the process, you are discouraging survivors from coming forward.

The only people you are protecting by a secretive and over complicated process is the abusers.

Since being forced to go public with my story, I have had the honor to talk with survivors from all over the country. Since working in this building, I have had the honor to talk with survivors of both sexual violence and harassment. I can tell you without hesitation that the only motivation survivors have in reporting their stories is to prevent other people from having the experience as well. An anonymous and secretive process does not allow us to protect each other.

Finally, you should know that the EEOC trainings you have mandated all staff attend this week were incredibly offensive, problematic and disrespectful. At the time I wrote this testimony, over 20 legislative staffers have signed a letter explaining as such. By the time the letter is in all of your inboxes tomorrow morning, it's possible that there will be many more people signed on.

I'm here offering my experience up for your consideration because I believe that you have good intentions in convening this committee. I believe that with the right approach, you can find a way to adequately support people in this building who experience any kind of harassment. However, the bills up for consideration today are not the answer. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.