



To: Senate Committee on Education

From: Nancy Willard, Director of Embrace Civility in the Digital Age

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Re: SB 548 (and HB 2224 and SB 12)

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I was hoping to testify but it turns out that I have to focus elsewhere. So I am going to briefly write what I was going to say in my 2 minutes. My written testimony is also provided.

Unfortunately at this time the pending bills related to improving the social and emotional well being of students profoundly lack integration. SB 584. SB 12. HB 2224. The only way we are going to be able to effectively move forward is through an integration of these proposed initiatives.

The foundational delivery framework set forth in SB 584 of prevention specialists working through the ESDs is really important - essential. This absolutely must occur.

However the language of SB 584 is way too focused on "threats" and "violence." The language fails to encompass the kinds of initiatives set forth in HB 2224 - and the ESD prevention specialists must be involved in this. There were reportedly many background efforts to change the language of SB 584 to more of a mental health promotion approach and these efforts failed. I do not know why they failed. This failure is an indication of a concern. But since I have not been able to find out why such efforts failed, I do not know what the nature of the concern is.

The concept of "threat assessment" needs to be shifted to "risk assessment." This should include threats of violence, suicide concerns, and substantial disruption situations. The focus must be on root causes and triggering events. This risk assessment approach can also support positive discipline for all instances of misbehavior.

SB 584 calls for an ODE staff person. HB 2224 will require several staff people. This should be integrated. Likely at least 3 staff people will be necessary at ODE.

When I first saw the School Safety Task Force Plan last September I strongly encouraged a more mental health promotion approach and better integration with the ODE Advisory Committee recommendations. I was told I should trust that this would occur. There is no evidence of any attempts at integration that I can see thus far.

In the last several weeks I have reached out to Colt Gill, COSA, and Dave Novotney trying to encourage better integration. I was told I should trust that this will occur. But since these leaders had all fall when they were working on these plans and legislative language I do not know why efforts to achieve better integration were not entered into then. The failure to achieve integration prior to the legislative session raises concerns about ultimate effectiveness of these efforts. But since I have not been able to find out why the need for integration was not evident and did not occur, I do not know what the nature of the concern is.

I have no idea how as a legislative body you might be able to lock leaders from ODE, COSA, the school safety task force, and OAESD into a room and not let them out until they present to you an integrated plan, but this is probably what needs to occur. You could provide them with coffee and food.

I spent some time last week creating some overview documents that I sent to Colt Gill and Dave Novotney on how this might occur and several additional components I think are necessary to ensure accountability. I have not received any feedback one way or the other.

So in the hopes this insight may be of some interest to someone, I am going to submit these documents also as testimony. My apologies for overloading you and your staff. Thank you so much for caring about the well-being of Oregon's young people.