



Written Testimony in Support of HB 2562 3/29/19 Hearing before the House Judiciary Committee

On behalf of the Oregon Women's Equity Coalition (OWEC), a 57-member coalition of nonprofit and advocacy groups serving women and girls in Oregon, please accept this written testimony in support of SB 2562, which provides additional funding for the Oregon Department of Education to increase its Title IX Coordinator staffing from .25 FTE to 2 FTEs. Adequate resources and staffing for Title IX enforcement and education is critical because gender-based harassment and bullying continue at alarming rates. The most recent Healthy Teens Survey indicates that when asked about whether during the past 30 days a student has been bullied at or on their way to school with unwanted sexual comments or attention:

- 6.9% of 8th graders and 5.7% of 11th graders said yes
- 6.1% of 8th graders and 2.8% of 11th graders said they had been bullied because someone thought they were LGBTQ
- 2% of 11th graders had given into unwanted sexual activity because of pressure

Currently, there is only one very part-time staffing (.25 FTE) to oversee Title IX enforcement and prevention of gender-based harassment and discrimination in *all* of Oregon's K-12 schools. This means that school districts are left largely on their own when it comes to designing policies and practices for dealing with the important and sensitive issues associated with Title IX enforcement and prevention education. Without additional resources, the system continues to function at miniscule capacity in comparison to the great need. Here is a sample of critical activities falling through the cracks because of inadequate staffing:

- Each school site is required to have a Title IX Coordinator, but they receive no training about what that means or how to execute their job.
- There is no statewide guidance or standards about how to handle gender-based harassment, bullying or assault complaints.
- Communications between school-based Title IX Coordinators is difficult as there is no central mechanism to identify who they are. In fact, many don't even know they've been designated as their school's Title IX Coordinator. This also means students don't know who to go to about harassment.
- Schools have no guidance about what it means to provide access to equitable experiences for students of both sexes, including athletics or girls-only classes.
- Bullying of LGBTQ students is particularly problematic, but it isn't being sufficiently identified nor are statewide programs in place to help prevent it.
- The one .25 FTE ODE Title IX Coordinator does not have sufficient time to answer all the questions that school-based Title IX Coordinators have.

We support the solution provided for by HB 2562, which would provide funding for at least two full-time Title IX Coordinators at the Oregon Department of Education.

Deborah Steinkopf, Co-Chair
djsteinkopf@gmail.com

Jodi Ballard-Beach, Co-Chair
jodi.ballard@gmail.com