

TO CHAIR WILLIAMSON, VICE -CHAIRS GORSEK AND SPRENGER AND MEMBERS
OF THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

FROM: Joyce Zook, Member of American Association of University Women

RE: Support for House Bill 2562

I write this in support of House Bill 2562.

It is frankly shocking that there is only one, one-quarter FTE State Title IX Coordinator at the Oregon Department of Education overseeing Title IX enforcement and prevention of gender-based harassment and discrimination in all of our K-12 schools. This means that school districts are on their own when developing policies for dealing with these important, sensitive issues. Our K - 12 students are also on their own in trying to deal with them. When members of AAUW of OR attempted to deliver Title IX packages to schools, we often ran into schools where the Title IX Coordinator didn't even now who he or she was.

Title IX reaches a broad range of important matters, including sexual harassment and bullying, athletics, girls only classes, access to STEM and CTE programs and more. It touches not only girls but also boys, members of the LGBTQ and non-binary communities, and staff. Regardless of the breadth of the law, our state has yet to develop state-wide training programs or continuing education programs for school-site Title IX Coordinators. These school-site Title Coordinators also have no consistent vehicle for sharing resources or communicating with each other about the factual situations they are presented with or how to keep up with the latest best practices.

At the present time there are no sample policies about Title IX matters, or investigation tool kits (with forms for use by witnesses, writing reports, how to deal with police investigations, etc.), posters letting students and staff know about Title IX, or how schools might conduct a self-audit to determine if their students and staff really do know what gender-based discrimination means.

When I attended the hearing in Woodburn, conducted by legislators who focused upon improving Oregon's educational system, I heard testimonies of parents of children who expressed concern over the school's enforcement of issues relating to behavior and harassment. It reinforced to me the need for more support in the schools for teachers who deal with these issues, all that are addressed in Title IX rules.

Our students understand the difference between adults or systems that tell them one thing but do another. Without significantly more attention being paid to authorize and actualize Title IX enforcement and compliance, and prevention of gender-based discrimination, our students will get the message — it's okay to harass, bully and take unfair advantage of others. This isn't the Oregonian way.

I urge you to support HB 2562.

Respectfully,

Joyce Zook,
Salem, Oregon