

March 29, 2019

The Honorable Jennifer Williamson, Chair
The Honorable Chris Gorsek, Co-Chair
The Honorable Sherrie Sprenger, Co-Chair
Members of the House Committee On Judiciary
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB2562

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is Danny Rosen and I am the current Chair for the Oregon chapter of GLSEN and Co-Chair for the GLSEN National Advisory Council.

Today I am asking for your support of HB2562.

Title IX is an important protection for the youth in our schools. Over the last two years there has been confusion about what protections TITLE IX covers. In May 2016, in part at the request of the Dallas Oregon School District, the Oregon Department of Education issued "Guidance to School Districts: Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment for Transgender Students". The purpose was to help school districts implement policies and practices that clearly state discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Many school districts found this guidance an important foundation and, more importantly, documentation that can be used to address concerns from community members who are concerned about transgender and gender non-conforming support for students.

GLSEN Oregon has a long history of holding state wide conferences for LGBTQ+ youth in Oregon and SW Washington. Our experiences show that there continues to be troubling behavior toward students who express their gender identity. At our 2017 GLSEN Oregon/NIKE Youth Sport Summit we asked this question:

If you like sports but do not participate, Why?

I would like to highlight some of these students responses:

Because of social anxiety and feeling like I can't keep up with the other guys a lot of whom don't see me as one of them... - (Transgender Youth - Yamhill County)
Because it's not a mentally healthy environment (Sophomore Lane County)
Because it gives me anxiety - (gender fluid - Sophomore)
Because I am a girl - (Sophomore - Lane County) - desired sport - Football
Don't want to take off my binder - (Transgender Youth - Washington County)

These youth represent the growing number of youth who would like to participate in sports but find some kind of barrier. Note that most of these youth are from smaller school districts. Additionally recognize these students are attending an event where they are supported and are able to express their sexual orientation or gender identity openly. The resources and support

that larger school districts bring to support these youth continues to evolve. Districts like the Portland Public School District developed extensive guidelines that continue to evolve as experience uncovers areas that need additional clarification. Many districts do not have these resources so the implementation of TITLE IX protections are disparate across districts in the state.

Even more troubling are districts that make little or no effort to follow the guidance provided by the Oregon Department of Education or willfully deny protections to transgender or gender non-conforming youth. There are districts that I have experience with that have threatened educational staff with firing for simply providing youth the opportunity to share the pronouns and preferred name that they use.

The 2018 Oregon Student Wellness Survey indicated that about 1.5% of 6th graders, 2.8 % of 8th graders and 2.3 % of 11th graders identify their gender as something other than female or male.

The 2017 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey asked specifically about Transgender and Non-binary/GNC (gender non-conforming) identities. The survey indicted about 0.4% of 8th and 11th graders identified as Transgender. The number of Non-Binary/GNC youth was significant at 4.8% of 8th graders and 5.5 % of 11th graders.

We all know about the alarming rates of suicide by young people. What most people don't know is LGBT youth are almost five times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth and 40% of transgender adults reported having made a suicide attempt. (Trevor Project). In many schools, incidents of bullying and harassment have to be extreme and frequent to receive attention. The Trevor Project reports that for **each** episode of LGBT victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment or abuse, increases the likelihood of self-harming behavior by 2.5 times on average.

Your support of HB2562 is needed.

Youth who are bravely standing up for who they are need the support this legislation will provide. In some of these cases the act of authentically presenting their sexual orientation or gender identity is life saving, especially if they have the support and resources that they need. TITLE IX is one of those resources that provide these life saving supports.

Respectfully,

Danny Rosen - Chair, GLSEN Oregon
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