

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

FROM: Mardy Stevens, Member of the American Association of University Women of Oregon

RE: Support for House Bill 2562

I write this in support of House Bill 2562. And, I request that this be included as an exhibit to the hearing on HB 2562, scheduled for hearing March 29th.

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 know who he or she was. I personally found my deliveries well received, but many times the recipient was pretty much in the dark about their Title IX responsibilities.

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 toolkits (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.

My personal experience related to Title IX includes: In 2017, when I attended a new student orientation at Mt. Hood Community College, participants were given an orientation packet with a reference to Title IX, but it was never spoken to during the hours long orientation. Previously, I had the privilege to be at MHCC supporting the women's softball team as they advocated for training facilities and schedules equal to the men's program. Prior to delivering Title IX packages to schools outside of Multnomah County I looked on school districts' websites to locate the Title IX Coordinator. Too many times the information was missing from the website.

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,

Mardy Stevens

Gresham, Oregon