

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

FROM: Diane Winn, 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.

It is disturbing that there is only one part-time 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. Last year, I heard a presentation about what is being done at the college and university level in Oregon and was very impressed. Yet younger students do not share these same benefits. It is impossible for one part-time person to oversee all K-12 schools and therefore school districts are on their own when dealing with these important, sensitive issues. 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.

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.

A couple of years ago, a friend told me her 15 year old grand daughter had been bullied. Family finally had her transferred to another school after trying to problem solve. It was tragic that the girl and her parents did not receive the help they should have. I've heard similar stories from other friends and know that bullying and harassment are far too common. In fact, AAUW published a research report "Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School" which found that nearly half (48 percent) of the students surveyed experienced some form of sexual harassment in the 2010-11 school year, and the majority of those students (87 percent) said it had a negative effect on them.

It is unfair to our students to not take this issue seriously and provide them with services and support to prevent gender-based discrimination, harassment and bullying which is in fact required by federal law. A first step toward doing this is to appropriate additional funding to the OR Department of Education in order to increase its State Title IX Coordinator positions to two FTE's.

I therefore urge you to support HB 2562.

Respectfully,

Diane Winn,
Portland, Oregon