

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office
"Advocating Equality and Diversity"
421 SW Oak Street, Portland, OR 97204
O 503.302.9725
Email: oco.mail@oregon.gov

House Committee on Judiciary
Testimony in support of HB 2562
March 29, 2019, at 9:30am, Hearing Room E

Chair House Democratic Leader Williamson, Vice-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Representatives Barker, Bynum, Greenlick, Lewis, McLane, Piluso, Power and Stark:

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions, in their roles of advocates for women and communities of color, strongly support HB 2562 which authorizes funding for at least two full time Title IX coordinators at the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to prevent sexual harassment, bullying and gender-based discrimination.

There should be equal opportunity for all students to succeed in their K-12 education but right now, there are too many girls and members of LGBTQ community, especially those from communities of color, who confront challenges that undermine their success in school. The most recent Healthy Teen Survey reflects statistics on the high degree of bullying and unwanted sexual comments or attention reported by high school students.

According to the National Women's Law Center, there are major challenges to equal opportunity for all K-12 students:

- Both sexual harassment and sexual violence are prohibited in schools under federal law, yet many girls still experience harassment and assault, which can have a devastating impact on their lives.
- Too many girls are leaving school because of the lack of trauma-informed approaches to deal with sexual harassment, assault and bullying.
- Bullying of LGBTQ students is particularly problematic with few programs designed to help prevent it.
- As a result of unfair discipline practices, girls are at risk of dropping out or are being pushed out of school. Girls of color are more likely to receive disproportionate discipline.
- Access to equal educational opportunities remain out of reach for girls in school athletic programs receiving limited resources compared to boys, and for those girls wanting to enroll in girls-only career and technical education programs in fields leading to high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand jobs. Girls of color tend to lack this access the most.

Title IX mandates that these challenges for students must be addressed. However, at present there are not enough resources within the Oregon Department of Education to adequately oversee the enforcement and prevention of gender-based discrimination in all the K-12 schools within the state. Currently at ODE, there is only one .25 FTE State Title IX coordinator to oversee each school-based Title IX coordinator. Consequently, this results in little oversight from central administration as each school district develops its own policies and procedures for these important and sensitive issues. This lack of personnel resources has resulted in the following: 1) No statewide guidance about how to handle gender-based harassment, bullying or assault complaints; 2) No training for the school-based Title IX coordinators about how to implement an

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effective program; 3) No guidance on how to identify bullying and what best practices to address the situation; 4) No guidance on how to provide equitable experiences for the students of both sexes, including athletics and girls-only programs.

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions join with the Oregon Joint Committee on Student Success and AAUW in recognizing the need to supplement personnel resources within ODE to address the inadequacy of Title IX enforcement across Oregon Schools. All Oregon students, no matter what sex, gender identity, or race/ethnicity, deserve the educational opportunity as specified by Title IX.

We urge an Aye vote on HB 2562.



Dr. Barbara Spencer, OCFW Chair



Jamal Fox, OCBA Chair



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