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March 28, 2019

Re: Support HB 2657-2

Dear Chair Williamson, Vice Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Kristin Schlotterbeck and I manage Clackamas Women's Services' Violence Prevention Program. Schools invite our Educators into their health classes as guest presenters and content experts to provide sexual and dating violence prevention programming. In a given year, our Violence Prevention Educators work with roughly 5,000 middle and high school students in Clackamas County to teach them about healthy relationships, consent, bystander intervention, sexual and dating violence, and how to have empathy for victims.

Each year I meet with the health teachers we work with to get feedback on our programming. Last year, I sat down with a health teacher from a rural high school, who told me she was retiring early from teaching, because she was so overwhelmed and frustrated by the requirements that were continually being placed on her without the necessary additional infrastructure and support.

During that school year, her district was trying to navigate how to fulfill the new child sexual abuse prevention requirements, which required four days of instruction for children K-12. Everyone involved agreed that it was important and necessary instruction for their students, but the lack of tangible support around implementing such programming left many feeling resentful and defeated.

When they researched curricula, they found that the programming they felt most confident about had an initial price, plus the yearly cost to update the materials when new editions came out and provide booster trainings for staff. Teachers did not feel equipped to teach on such a sensitive topic without additional training, but training all the districts' teachers would be cost prohibitive. They were looking at offering four school-wide assemblies each year for the entire student body on child sexual abuse. They asked us if we were in a position to help them provide it, but we lacked capacity to do so at that time. The health teacher I spoke with knew that school-wide assemblies would meet the requirements as they were written, but were not within the spirit of what the requirements sought to accomplish, and yet, she could not foresee another solution for her students or her district.

Our teachers care SO MUCH about their students. They want them to have access the best instruction possible, and they are constantly being asked to do more with fewer and fewer resources. They know that similar to drug prevention or suicide prevention that there are best practices in violence prevention. They know that when best practices aren't followed it can lead to worse outcomes and potentially retraumatize students in their classes who have already experienced child abuse, sexual violence, or domestic violence. That's why they invite our Educators in—as experts in domestic and sexual violence, as direct connections with intervention resources, and as professionals who are specialized in current prevention best practices.

Despite the many students we work with, each year we turn away schools because of lack of capacity. Teachers struggle to meet the currently existing obligations for violence prevention programming on their own without the necessary additional support. I am confident that this situation is present across the state as communities work to prevent violence.

I strongly urge you to support HB 2657-2 and the necessary infrastructure, technical assistance, and resources it will provide for students, schools, and community-based programs trying to stem this public health crisis. Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely,

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