



## **Testimony in Support of HB 2562**

**Submitted by: Olivia Stone, Board Chair  
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon**

Chair Williamson and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

As advocates and champions for reproductive justice, NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon believes that all Oregonians need equitable opportunity to live healthy and productive lives. On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, I respectfully request that the committee pass H.B. 2562 to ensure that Oregon students are supported and able to achieve their educational goals free from gender-based harassment and discrimination.

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon is dedicated to developing and sustaining a constituency that uses the political process to guarantee every woman and person who can become pregnant the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing legal abortion.

We recognize that a person's reproductive health access and experiences cannot be separated from their mental, social, economic, familial, communal, or environmental well-being. Currently, Oregon students are experiencing gender-based harassment and sexual assault at an alarming rate: According to the Oregon Health Authority's most recent Healthy Teens Survey, when asked whether during the past 30 days they had been bullied at or on the way to school with unwanted sexual comments or attention, 6.9% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 5.7% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders said yes. Additionally, 6.1% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 2.8% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders said they had been bullied because someone thought they were gay, lesbian or bisexual. Most alarmingly, 2% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders had given into sexual activity when they didn't want to because of pressure. This is unacceptable.

Our students deserve to be able to attend school without fear of sexual harassment, but right now there is only one .25 FTE State Title IX Coordinator at the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) 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. While each school site is required to have a Title IX Coordinator, these positions receive no training and schools have no statewide guidance about how to handle gender-based harassment, bullying or assault complaints. This means that students often don't know who to turn to when they've experienced harassment, because there is no central mechanism to determine

who the designated Title IX coordinator is at their school. Many coordinators don't even know they've been designated.

The one .25 FTE ODE Title IX Coordinator does not have sufficient time to answer all the questions that school-based Title IX Coordinators have, so Oregon schools receive no guidance on how to provide access to equitable experiences for all students. We're leaving our students—and LGBTQ students in particular—behind. It is past time that we ensure that all students, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, where they live, and where they go to school, are able to attain their education goals free from gender-based discrimination and harassment. I urge you to pass this bill.