

Student Activities and Leadership Programs - SALP

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Letter of Support for SB 1037 Resilience Task Force Bill

March 29, 2019

To the Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee:

I am writing to express support for SB 1037 The Resilience Task Force Bill and urge the committee to pass this bill because it will establish a much-needed culture of preparedness in Oregon. I am professional staff at Portland State University where I supervise student-run services at Portland State, one of which is the PSU Food Pantry. I am also a PhD Candidate in Leadership & Change at Antioch University through which my research is focusing on trauma-informed approaches to campus food pantries as a means of student development and resilience. Between my doctoral research and working in higher education in Oregon, resilience education is often at the core of what I do everyday through:

- teaching the concept of resilience as a leadership capacity and working individually with students to develop their own psychological, emotional, and psychosocial resilience.
- developing trauma-informed pantry services as an approach to creating an organizational culture of resilience for students accessing the PSU Food Pantry more than 17,000 times last year. Some of these students accessing services are veterans who may especially benefit from trauma-informed pantry services.
- training students who run events and services to respond in an emergency or crisis situation—whether that be the possibility of a fire, earthquake, or active shooter.
- continuously deepening my own understanding and professional capacity to serve as a resource for resilient campus and community-based responses to emergencies and even the daily sense of overwhelm and toxic stress that many students and community members experience.
- knowing that the psychological, social, and psychosocial resilience capacities of every individual will be critical for recovery from any campus emergency, especially the impending earthquake.

Beyond my day-to-day work as an educator, there are two primary paths that led me to this work. In 2015, I attended a higher education conference in New Orleans where local university administrators spoke about their experiences during and after Hurricane Katrina. Their stories reflected responses of psychological, emotional, and psychosocial resilience even in the face of such traumatic events. I left that conference wondering, how will Oregonians who are already struggling with so much in their daily lives—depression, PTSD, anxiety, interpersonal violence, and more—be able to respond resiliently when the big earthquake hits? Three years later as part of my doctoral studies, I completed an in-depth review of research about urban disaster resilience planning. What I discovered was that most resilience preparation has focused on planning large-scale structural and engineered ‘solutions.’ Researchers acknowledge the need to involve those who are most vulnerable to disasters, but I found no research focused on individual and family-scale disaster resilience in the psycho-emotional realms. By passing SB 1037, Oregon is positioned to be a leader in this important realm of creating a culture of preparedness through resilience education and training.

Preventative approaches are essential because resilience is a capacity that is developed over time. Our state is already lacking in sufficient mental health services for the current level of demand. Preventative education and capacity-building are important steps in reducing post-disaster demand and costs. When individuals have already developed resilience skills, their ability to recovery from disaster-related trauma will likely be quicker. Thank you for your interest in the bill. I don't think the State of Oregon can afford to wait any longer and hope you also see the urgency of passing SB1037 this legislative session.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela Hamilton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Angela Hamilton
Oregon Resident
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