

JANELLE S. BYNUM
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 51



COMMUNITIES

East Portland
Damascus
Gresham
Boring
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Happy Valley

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

1/30/2019

OSAA Executive Board
9650, 25200 SW Parkway Ave Suite 1
Wilsonville, OR 97070

Dear OSAA Executive Board Members,

Thank you for your service to the Board of Directors of the Oregon Schools Athletic Association. I am writing to you to express my concern with the level of support offered to the students from Parkrose High School who were recently reported to have been subjected to racial epithets during their visit to St. Helens High School.

While the two schools connected to work out a community solution, what I was surprised to find was a very lukewarm response to the situation from your organization. From what I could find in online news searches, there was simply a pointer to OSAA guidelines that govern interscholastic competition. There was not a visit to the girls from a member, a public statement making it very clear that the behavior was unacceptable, nor was there an announcement of a review to ensure this would not happen again. If I missed it, please accept my apology, but I also looked on the website and saw no mention of the issue.

This concerns me because it is widely known that students of color from across the state can cite very similar experiences and very little has been done to address the issue. Players and coaches alike report fans harassing them in the stands as well as other student players using offensive language during competition. Sometimes the offenses are within earshot of officials and other times they are whispered on the field. As a parent of four children who compete in sports, I have first-hand experience of the competitive environment of youth sports. My own son has been called "n-gger" during youth competition and the memory still pains me to this day. I also see the difference in how my older children's high schools have addressed fan, parent, and student athlete conduct versus my local school district. Central Catholic and LaSalle Prep have made it clear the behaviors that are acceptable and those that are not. I can say that I have pushed my own school district to move in that direction and address the racism that manifests itself in sports competition in the stands, on the field and in the locker room.



Going forward, I would like to request the following:

1. That you develop/strengthen your policies toward racist behavior in all parts of the athletic experience starting with understanding the perspectives of minority students and their coaches.
2. I would also like to see sanctions levied against schools whose environments are allowed to become unhealthy for players, both for the home and away teams.
3. Finally, I would like to ask that you provide a transparent process for students and their parents to make complaints or bring awareness to issues that they consider are cause for concern.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Janelle Bynum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Representative Janelle S. Bynum