

February 3, 2020

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee on Education:

I am a community member and I respectfully request the committee's support of House Bill 4132, the Oregon Student Health Survey Bill. To work towards equity in health and education, we need to understand the scope of issues facing our youth and be responsive to their needs by, for instance, ensuring that our health education standards are implemented, which include LGBTQ+ inclusivity; consent and healthy relationships; sexual activity and HIV/AIDS knowledge; child abuse prevention; bullying and school safety. The Oregon Student Health Survey is the only source of statewide data on school climate and the health & well-being of Oregon students.

In an OHA survey of all 197 school districts, only 35 school districts reported having the required plan of instruction for sex ed. We must support this survey to ensure we are collecting the most accurate data about teen health possible so we can make informed decisions. The Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education are doing a wonderful job with limited resources and we must step up to support this survey more fully.

Why it's important to me that Oregon's public school students have access to comprehensive, age-appropriate, and LGBTQ+ inclusive sexual health education  
Sex education is widely supported by a majority of Americans and by the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics. In fact, more than 90% of parents support sex education in both middle and high school. And the vast majority of parents, including Democrats and Republicans, want sex education to include topics like sexually transmitted infections, birth control, abstinence, sexual orientation, personal safety, healthy relationships, decision making and communication skill building. We need accurate data and a well-supported health survey in order to know where the needs for sex education and issues such as rising STI rates are in each community around the state. Supporting HB 4132 gets us closer to this critical information.

Young people need access to information and resources that include consent and healthy relationships — starting well before college and well before they become sexually active — to help them understand how to ask for consent, respect personal boundaries, and learn how to say and receive a “no.”

I would have loved to have the experience to have something like this when I was younger. I feel like I would have saved myself some hardships with bad relationships and poor self esteem. Writing to the committee is a small part I can play in helping pass this bill, but if it helps other youths alleviate some of the stresses similar that I had experienced, it's worth it.

Please codify and fund the Oregon Student Health Survey and provide the critical resources necessary to help schools and communities make data-informed decisions about the health and well-being of their students now and for years to come.

Sincerely,

Ashley  
Eugene, Oregon