

February 3, 2020

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee of Education,

I am a student at the University of Oregon and I respectfully request the committee's support of House Bill 4123, 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 includes 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 and well-being of Oregon students.

In an OHA survey of all 197 school districts, only 35 school districts reported having a required plan of instruction for sex ed. All people and communities have the right to be educated on sexual health and the resources that are available to them. It is vital to remain inclusive and support students in body autonomy and planning for the future.

It is important that Oregon's public school students have access to comprehensive, age-appropriate, and LGBTQ+ inclusive sexual health education. Young people need access to information and resources that include consent and healthy relationships - starting well before college and well before they are sexually active - to help them understand how to ask for consent, respect personal boundaries, and learn to say and receive a "no".

As a high school student in 2016, sex was something everyone talked about (and some people participated in) but no one really knew what it was. I heard various stories about what sex is, who can do it, how to do it, what you shouldn't do, what you shouldn't say, etc. This ambiguity with what sex is can be very harmful to everyone but especially LGBTQ+ students. Lack of education leads to confusion, lack of communication, and unhealthy sexual relationships. If I had had sex education in middle school or high school I believe my sexual experiences and those of my peers would be much more enjoyable and less fearful. Education on these topics needs to be accessible to students so they can develop body autonomy and some knowledge about sex before they become sexual active.

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

Sincerely,

Robynne LaPorte
Eugene, Oregon

