

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I have seen firsthand how our Legislators can move mountains in short order when lives are at risk. I plead for you to do this now.

As superintendent of Oregon's fifth largest school district, I urge your support of school and community safety efforts that must be moved to law during the current session. You will immediately help to improve school and community safety throughout Oregon by passing HB 4145.

Schools are supposed to be a place of learning. A place where students learn about math, history and science. All of that disappears when a threat happens.

These threats are not just disruptions to the school day, they chip away at our students' and staff members' feeling of safety and affect our students' ability to learn.

The day after a threat is made, we've seen the affected school have a 30 percent attendance rate. Oregon already has a short school year, we cannot afford to have students miss any more time in a classroom. When a school receives a threat, students and, frankly, families, can feel unsafe and experience post-traumatic stress.

After a threat, we talk to our families and students about teachable moments and remind them when they see something, say something. But we are tired of teachable moments. Our schools need real consequences and students and families need to know that these threats will truly not be tolerated in Oregon. This bill fixes a current hole in the system.

We have seen the impact of a school shooting, where a student took his own life. Hundreds of people were impacted by that experience for years.

It doesn't need to be like this.

With the correct prevention, intervention and response, we can change lives and make our schools safer. We can hear these crises for help from students and adults and make it possible to prevent a mass casualty event.

By acting together, we can exponentially increase our positive impact as we continue to advocate for the safe learning environments our students and staff deserve.

I look forward to working with you and thank you on behalf of our more than 18,500 students and the more than half million students across the state.

Thank you.

Shay Mikalson,
Superintendent Bend-La Pine Schools