



Date: February 10, 2020

To: House Judiciary Committee, Chair Sanchez and Members

From: Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations Consultant

RE: *HB 4145 [Threats to schools and places of worship]*

It is my honor to testify in support of HB 4145 on behalf of the 45,000 members of the Oregon Education Association.

This bill seeks to establish a crime of threatening a school or place of worship. Given that these are increasingly likely to be venues for violence and threats of violence, this proposal is well-timed to respond.

Our teachers and education support professionals believe that it is well past time to respond to escalating violence that emanates from the troubled minds of alienated and angry people, not just with jail, but also with mental health assessments, which may unearth underlying illness that could respond to treatment.

We know that there is no silver bullet to resolve nor single cause of threats or acts carried out that accounts for the general escalation of hate, anger, and violence in our communities, but HB 4145 will, if enacted, help Oregon's law enforcement community address a perpetrator's motivations and perhaps help to steer that person into treatment and prevent future tragedies.

Our students are looking to the adults in charge to take meaningful steps to keep them safe. It shouldn't taken a mass movement of young people to make that happen. In addition to keeping weapons out of the hands of those who seek to harm others, this bill proposes to do just exactly what gun advocates advise: assess the person for mental illness.

By no means do we think that places of worship or schools will be safer with this bill alone, but HB 4145, in combination with other strategies, ought to be seen as a collection of strategies to keep our communities safer.

Thank you for consideration of our perspective on this important topic. We urge your aye vote for HB 4145.