

**Paul L Evans**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
**DISTRICT 20**



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

February 10, 2020

House Committee on Judiciary  
Oregon House of Representatives  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Sanchez and Members of the Committee:

The US Department of Defense defines terrorism as, “The unlawful use of violence, or the threat of use of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments, or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political” (JP 3-07.2). In simpler terms, terrorism can be understood as the threat of violence to spread fear in support of premeditated, purposeful outcomes.

House Bill 4145 (HB 4145) is a good policy. It seeks to thwart potential violence, and the threat of violence, by fencing off schools and places of worship. These are supposed to be spaces for learning, refuge; they are reservations of and for peaceful interaction. I believe that we have entered an era where threatening such spaces are equal to shouting fire in a crowd and other comments that present our community with a clear and present danger. In today's’ overly mediated world, a mere threat of violence can itself spread fear and panic.

There will likely be controversy surrounding this measure. So be it. Free Speech within a society was not intended to serve as a fig leaf for incentivizing harm through weaponized rhetoric. As a person who has spent most of my adult life defending the rights of all Americans to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – I can tell you that protecting spaces where our neighbors gather in peace – keeps faith with our duties to establish a Perfect Union. Whenever any among us are denied the right to a safe space, all of us are denied that right. Faith and families are the bedrock of our society; we must do all we can within the limits of the law to defend the ability of all to practice faith without fear, to learn in schools without fear.

In closing, I want to thank you for considering this measure. Domestic terrorism is a growing challenge to our Republic and democratic norms. I believe HB 4145 will become an important anchor, a cultural response to the chaos that too often appears to be overtaking our civil discourse. This law would set a boundary that can hopefully help us begin to disarm our increasingly intemperate rhetoric; it may provide us with the common ground upon which to build new relationships. Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul L. Evans".

Paul L. Evans  
Chair, Oregon House of Representatives Committee on Veterans’ and Emergency Preparedness  
Oregon House of Representatives (HD 20)