

Central Oregon Threat Assessment Team Testimony  
Oregon House Bill 4145  
80<sup>th</sup> Oregon Legislative Assembly – 2020 Regular Session

We are living in a day and age where threats of school violence have become a norm. We have reached a point in our society where we have to teach our children to hide in their classroom or to constantly be prepared to run away from danger. Our schools have had to place a greater emphasis on training our students on Lockdown and Lockout drills because of the significant increase in threats of school violence across our country. Our schools should be a safe place for everyone in the community. Our students spend half of their waking hours inside of our schools where our staff and community work collaboratively to educate our children into thriving citizens.

It is common to have a threat of violence made towards a student or school in Central Oregon on an almost weekly basis. These threats can range from a writing on the bathroom wall, conversations between friends, or messages left on social media sites. Most threats are found to be non-credible, but can still take hours or even days of investigation by law enforcement and school officials to determine if the threat is credible or not.

We have made great strides as a community and a state in identifying threats and making it safer for students to report without the fear of retribution. The Safe Oregon tip line has proven to be a great resource for providing a consistent and safe avenue for students and community members to confidentially report potential acts of violence or safety concerns in our schools. However, law enforcement and school officials still lack the necessary resources to investigate and prevent potential threats of violence in our schools. We are currently spending the majority of our efforts in reacting to potential threats of school violence, instead of spending our time and resources proactively providing the necessary resources to help prevent threats or acts of violence in our schools and communities.

Having a law that allows law enforcement to take action in a more efficient manner can help keep our schools and communities safer. Having a criminal statute specific to threats in schools can provide the necessary resources for law enforcement, school officials, and district attorneys to ensure our schools remain a safe learning environment for the whole community. Law enforcement agencies currently are relying on vague and antiquated statutes when investigating and charging individuals that have made serious threats of violence towards students and schools.

In Central Oregon, law enforcement agencies have partnered with K-12 schools, community colleges, mental health agencies, and parole and probation agencies to create a Threat Assessment Team for our community. The goal of the team is to identify potential threats made by members of our community and to use a collaborative approach to provide resources in helping that individual while helping to keep the community safe. Having stronger statutes around threats of violence provides law enforcement with the necessary tools to keep the

community safe when a criminal investigation become the appropriate avenue of approach in keeping our community safe.

We urge you to support HB 4145. We believe it will make a positive difference in the lives of students in Central Oregon and throughout the state.