

Chair Dembrow, members of the committee thank you for your service. My name is Diana Fairhurst and I am representing Oregonians for Liberty in Education.

I would like to preface my remarks by saying that I have been a business owner for over 20 years and have hired people who needed a second chance, including a woman who was in prison for 9 years.

Oregonians for Liberty in Education opposes HB 2942. We absolutely believe in 2nd chances but there is a better way to integrate criminals back into society than putting them in our K-12 classrooms.

School safety has been a focus of this legislative session. Last week, the Senate Education Committee Chair issued a statement about SB 223 claiming that the bill's intent was solely to "make sure that all schools, public and private, are keeping our kids safe and free from predatory teachers." However, HB 2942 is concerning because of the potential safety risks it poses to children. The bill gives "consideration of criminal convictions in school settings," by proposing the removal of certain drug crimes from a list of convictions previously considered exclusionary for employment in schools; Crimes like the manufacturing and delivery of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine (among other illegal drugs), and includes performing those crimes within 1,000 feet of a school.

Current law prohibits individuals convicted of such drug crimes from receiving licensure from the Teacher Standards and Practice Commission (TSPC), making them ineligible to work in k-12 schools as teachers, administrators, school social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists. This bill changes that law.

Again, Oregonians for Liberty in Education opposes HB 2942.

Thank you.