

# OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE CAMPUS PROGRAM



## SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION SUPPORT SB1572

FEBRUARY 7, 2022

SUBMITTED BY: CARLI ROHNER, CAMPUS COORDINATOR

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

On behalf of The Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force, I urge your support of SB1572, our Campus Sexual Assault Prevention & Support Bill.

*The mission of SATF is to advance a multi-disciplinary, survivor-centered approach to the prevention of and response to sexual violence in Oregon. Our goal is to prevent sexual violence from happening in the first place, while simultaneously improving our response efforts to mitigate trauma and ensure the safety and security of all survivors.<sup>1</sup>*

Our Campus Program provides training and technical assistance to all of Oregon's colleges and universities - including community colleges, private universities and medical schools. We begin our work from the premise that violence is preventable. Sexual violence and abuse may be epidemic, but it is not endemic - meaning, it is not a natural part of human development. Our training and technical assistance seeks to address violence at its root causes, preventing it from happening in the first place.

In 2021, our Campus Program provided over 2100 technical assistance contacts with staff and faculty at Oregon schools working to address or prevent sexual harassment and violence. SB 1572 directly addresses three themes reflected in these contacts:

- The need for data and transparency
- The need for improved coordination of prevention work
- The need for consistency in supportive measures for students

<sup>1</sup> The Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force is a private, non-profit, non-governmental statewide agency with over 100 multi-disciplinary members appointed by Attorney General Rosenblum. Members serve as advisors on 1 of 8 subcommittees including: Advocacy Response, Campus, Criminal Justice, Legislative & Public Policy, Medical-Forensic, Men's Engagement, Offender Management, and Prevention Education.

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In the field of public health, we know that the first step in addressing a social problem, such as sexual violence and harassment in campus communities, is to understand the scope. We also know that the most cost-effective way to improve prevention work is to ensure consistency in policy, and ensure institutional consistency.

## **SB 1572 would require that:**

1. Schools conduct campus climate surveys that assess their students experiences with violence, and publish the data in an aggregate way that protects participant privacy, while also allowing those staff and faculty who are directly charged with providing prevention education and response measures full access to the community-specific data needed to implement effective measures to address violence
2. Require schools to move beyond federal requirements for prevention work, establishing campus-specific stakeholder groups that create comprehensive prevention plans and evaluate the progress of these plans in a way that aligns with national best practices; and
3. Ensure consistency between state and federal law to provide students with consistent access to supportive measures - such as counseling, housing and class changes, and other safety supports.

## **Campus Climate Surveys & Prevention Policies.**

By including statewide adoption of campus climate survey and prevention policies, Senate Bill 1572 provides the state of Oregon a unique opportunity to address the needs of students and our campus practitioners, increase transparency in a way that is both supportive of students and staff, and ensure that resources allocated to prevention and response work are used effectively.

Campus Climate Surveys<sup>2</sup> are a nationally recognized best practice in understanding the scope and breadth of student experiences with sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking. The Office on Violence Against Women continues to recommend climate surveys as a best practice for the prevention of sexual assault (Lindquist & Krebs, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> [Oregon SATF's Campus Climate Survey Toolkit](#), sponsored by the American Public Health Association (2017)  
[Administrator Information Packet on Campus Climate Surveys](#), U.S. Department of Justice (2017)  
["Not Alone" guidance document](#) from The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault (2014)

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Dr. Jennifer Freyd, professor emerita of psychology, University of Oregon, faculty affiliate of the Women's Leadership Innovation Lab at Stanford University and founder and president of the Center for Institutional Courage, summarized why surveys are such an integral part of our response to sexual violence on campus:

*"If we truly want to figure out how to bring an end to sexual violence on our campuses, uncovering the underlying facts about campus sexual victimization is an absolutely necessary first step. The scientific method is not perfect, but it is our best tool for uncovering those difficult underlying truths".<sup>3</sup>*

Currently, the state of Oregon has no mechanism to evaluate violence experienced by our collective student body, and thus we lose the opportunity to ensure that our state is effectively preventing and responding to violence faced by our students.

While our campuses currently collect data in alignment with their federal Clery obligations, we know that this information is woefully incomplete in detailing the full impact of violence on Oregon students.

Requiring Oregon institutions of higher education to 1) collect climate survey data that assesses the full impact of violence experienced by Oregon students and 2) making the data publicly available in a manner that protects the privacy of participants serves several key purposes:

- Provides those staff and faculty who are directly charged with providing prevention education and response measures full access to the community-specific data needed to implement effective measures to address violence and harassment;
- Allows institutions of higher education the ability to target resources to those initiatives and response resources that need them most, reducing financial waste and campus resources;
- Allows institutions of higher education the opportunity to provide transparency, improving community trust in resources and prevention education efforts; and
- Ensures that students have a mechanism to share their experiences with violence.

<sup>3</sup> Freyd, J.J. (2014) Use science as tool on campus sexual assault. [Op-Ed] The Register-Guard (Eugene, Oregon), November 9, 2014, p H4

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## **Supportive Measures**

Finally, Oregon has been identified as a national best practice in Title IX because of the trauma-informed legislation passed pertaining to student victim rights and creating better processes on campuses.

From protecting victims from compulsory participation in hearings to transparency regarding the rights and services available to them, Oregon has continually cemented its commitment to creating safe campuses.

Codifying non-punitive supportive measures in our state statutes – which is already required at the federal level – ensures that there is no gap between this federal legislation and Oregon law (HB 3415, 2019). Closing this gap will further strengthen our expectation that Oregon's institutions of higher education will support students to stay in school and graduate, while ensuring equitable outcomes for the student survivor and the respondent.

There remains a significant amount of work to accomplish in Oregon as we continue to move practitioners toward best practice and mold policies to better serve students, but as we work with campus programs throughout our state and nationally, we are proud to say that we have the privilege of working in Oregon because of the unprecedented reputation that our state brings with it in the arena of Title IX, trauma-informed best practices, and prevention activities.

SB1572 will further our efforts to improve the response to and prevention of sexual violence in higher education. For this reason we urge your support.

Sincerely,

Carli Rohner

*Campus Coordinator*

*Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force*