

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Ruiz, Vice Chair McIntire, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Nisa Ali, I am a student at the University of Oregon, and I am here today to speak in support of HB 2472.

I want to talk about an experience that took place on February 9th, 2023 in the Matthew Knight Arena at a UO men's basketball game versus USC. My friends and I, who are all people of color, were sitting next to a group of students who were being very disrespectful and making us uncomfortable. These students were making statements towards the Black athletes on the USC men's basketball team. These comments were telling the players who had braids, twists, wicks and an afro to cut their hair off. We were in shock when hearing these students yell out these comments. We would not let this behavior go unaddressed, my friends and I told these students that these comments were not acceptable or appropriate. The students did not take this well, they were yelling at us that they can say whatever they want because of freedom of speech. Derogatory comments started to be said to us, the students were escalating the situation. We were feeling unsafe and decided to move seats away from these students before something else happened. These students were not only talking about the athletes hair, but also comparing them to other black athletes, such as the late Kobe Bryant. Comments stating that these athletes were going to end up like the late Kobe Bryant, meaning they were going to be dead soon. This is not acceptable at all, students should not be making these comments to student athletes of color. This was just one incident that I happened to be around for, but behavior like this is happening on the regular. If we keep allowing for this to happen, who knows how far some students will go. We need to advocate and protect these athletes and students in the crowd as best as we can.

These issues are unacceptable. Oregon does not have a statewide, statutory strong stance or set of fan expectations when it comes to racist, sexist, or bigoted language that infringes upon the rights of others. HB 2472 would work to change that. Thank you for your time, and we hope that students can count on your support.