

Submitter: Gabe Howland  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Higher Education  
Measure: HB3456

To the House Committee on Higher Education:

I am an Oregon Student and also a confidential advocate in support of HB 3456.

I believe in this current climate, HB 3456 is essential for not only survivor support, but for also making the transition into a consent culture at colleges and other institutes of higher education. I would like to quickly address some of the things proposed in the bill and speak as to why they are necessary for survivors.

The first thing proposed is free legal, mental, and counseling services. When it comes to free legal and medical aid, I believe it is imperative that survivors have access to whatever aid they may need. When it comes to reporting, especially with Title IX, survivors who have a lawyer, and are able to receive medical treatment are far more successful if they choose to report. For survivors that don't wish to report, the support should not end there, survivors should have access to free mental health care to help them process the trauma they went through so they don't have to carry it with them alone.

The second thing proposed is confidential advising services. My school has a program like this in place already, where we have student confidential advocates; I am one of said advocates. Part of being a confidential advocate means that I am one of the people on campus that knows what options are available for survivors, and I have to know it well enough to be able to break down the complicated procedures of dealing with Title IX coordinators, finding legal aid, and getting medical and academic support to a survivor. We undergo over 40 hours of training focusing on various processes, especially revolving around Title IX and it is immensely complicated. Having a confidential adviser allows students to hear what options and resources are available without dealing with a member of the school's administration. Some Title IX coordinators may testify against this bill because they feel like they are fulfilling these needs, but what actually happens is those coordinators are dealing with fractions of the total population of survivors on campus. Having confidential advising services means survivors can go and ask questions and be heard without feeling the need to report, and if the process of reporting is immensely complex at a school which has an advising program, then survivors trying to figure out options at schools where these resources are not available is hundreds of times more difficult.

The third thing proposed is protections against retaliation. This means amnesty of school policy in the case of sexual assault. Survivors should not be punished for

coming forward if they were assaulted while underage drinking. Punishing survivors for coming forward makes campuses less safe, and a person's experience should not be invalidated because of academic policy.

And finally, climate surveys and increased prevention programming are no-brainers. Our administrations and institutions should be aware of who is vulnerable on campus and then try and help those populations. Allowing students to anonymously speak on their experience allows the school to see where they need to increase programming, especially around consent and bystander intervention. We as students, the faculty at our school, and other staff members should be updated on what school policy is and how to keep each other safe.

This bill is important for survivors because it gives survivors options. It is important because these policies are designed to make survivors' lives easier, and to make reporting or just living in the aftermath of an assault one that is less stressful. For any representatives who are still on the fence about whether or not to support the bill, I ask that you empathize with survivors everywhere, recognize how scary and confusing it can be to move forward, and realize how extremely beneficial HB 3456 will be for students everywhere.

Thank you.