

OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE



SUPPORT SB 575 SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION MARCH 16, 2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

Thank you for your time and consideration. On behalf of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (Oregon SATF), I am pleased to submit testimony in support of the Student Success Plan for Students with Disabilities SB 575.

At the Oregon SATF, our mission is to facilitate and support a collaborative, 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 victims.

The bold sentence above is a major factor why the Oregon SATF supports SB 575 and I would like to explain the connection. Students with disabilities face disproportionate systemic educational inequities, which have led to the worst outcomes of any student group in our state. As well, youth with disabilities also experience higher rates of sexual violence. One of the root causes of both disparities is ableism and SATF believes that in order to prevent sexual violence, we must address the root causes that allow it to exist in the first place. When disparities in education are addressed, it can play a role in the prevention of sexual violence.

The CDC lists academic achievement as one of the protective factors against both victimization and perpetration of sexual violence. As well, ableism has shaped stigmas and societal norms that historically has driven perpetration of violence against people with disabilities and also not included them in education and conversations on their bodies, boundaries, and rights. If students with disabilities are facing greater inequities in their school education, then they are not receiving the same quality education as their peers around Erin's Law, The Healthy Teen Relationship Act, and Human Sexuality Education, **which all combine to help comprehensively prevent sexual violence and other forms of violence and abuse.**

SB 575 will help to implement policies and practices that promote inclusion, accessibility, and equity for students with disabilities to eliminate systemic barriers in education. This includes ensuring professional development on best practices for teachers and staff, collecting better data, and prioritizing the engagement of families and students with disabilities through the Special Education Advisory Councils.

SB 575 addresses ableism and will contribute to enhanced educational outcomes for youth with disabilities while also playing a role in the prevention of increased rates of sexual violence this population experiences. **For this reason, we urge your full support of SB 575.**

Sincerely,



Eli Cox

Abuse Prevention Coordinator

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