

OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE



OPPOSE SB 473 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

MAY 10, 2023

SUBMITTED BY: OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Wright and Hudson, and Members of the House Committee on Education:

Thank you for your time and consideration. My name is Bethany Walmsley, Interim Executive Director, for the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (Oregon SATF). **Along with our colleagues, we urge you to oppose Senate Bill 473 as currently written.**

As our mission at Oregon SATF is to facilitate and support a collaborative, survivor-centered approach to the prevention of and response to violence and abuse across the lifespan, our goal is to prevent this violence from happening in the first place, while simultaneously improving our statewide response efforts to mitigate trauma and ensure the safety and security of all victims.

Since the first hearing held for SB 473 (April, 2023), it has come to our agency's attention the ways in which SB 473 could unintentionally cause harm to current efforts to prevent violence and abuse, including trafficking, and to our response systems for survivors statewide. **Although we deeply support trafficking prevention efforts, and originally offered support for SB 473 and suggestions for amendments, our organization cannot continue support of the current bill as written. As policy makers, we must ensure that our efforts to pass policies related to violence and abuse prevention are focused on stopping trafficking before it ever starts, and ensure that young people are connected to robust support mechanisms throughout Oregon.**

Oregon SATF and multiple stakeholders across the state (including educators, victim services providers, and violence prevention specialists) have offered feedback to the bill authors and supporters regarding concerns with SB 473, including, but not limited to:

- **The overlap of SB 473 with Erin's law**, which adds additional requirements to an unfunded mandate; and
- **SB 473's use of very limiting terms, in particular "curriculum"**. This educational term d'art has very specific implications for how trafficking education is implemented in schools, which will cause undue burden on educators, and limit trafficking prevention efforts in ways that are not culturally responsive.

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Ensuring trafficking prevention is included in Oregon's educational programming is both meaningful and critical. Leaders (including educators) in this work in Oregon are already investing in bolstering supports for schools when it comes to trafficking prevention, following the lead of experts around the country. In order to ensure schools have the best chance to implement comprehensive, robust, multi-strategy approaches to preventing trafficking and abuse, we encourage the committee to not move forward with this bill as written.

Erin's Law is much more than child sex abuse prevention. Research shows that when we implement abuse prevention efforts well, we are also working to prevent sexual assault, trafficking, domestic violence, dating violence, suicide, and more.¹ Since its passage in 2015, school districts, community partners, and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) have been working tirelessly to implement Erin's Law and have made incredible strides. ***Rather than bolstering the ongoing efforts of school districts these past seven years, this bill, as written, could unintentionally make it harder for schools to be successful implementing Erin's law, and to build out the robust multi-faceted prevention programming youth in Oregon deserve.***

SB473 is well intentioned, but needs significant improvements in order to fully support each of Oregon's 197 school districts to implement comprehensive prevention programming that uniquely meets the needs of their communities, and is supported by statewide best practices. **For these reasons, we encourage you to vote no on Senate Bill 473. Additionally, SATF would be grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with the committee on the development of a trafficking prevention policy before the next legislative session so we can really do this work right and in the ways youth in Oregon deserve.**

Thank you again for your time and investment in young people throughout Oregon. Please let us know if we can answer any questions moving forward.

Most sincerely,

Bethany Walmsley
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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017, November 7). Connecting the dots. Connecting the Dots. Retrieved January 31, 2023, from <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/connecting-the-dots/>