

Sara A. Gelser Blouin

State Senator

District 8



Oregon State Senate

February 9, 2024

Dear Chair Neron and members of the committee,

I am pleased to offer testimony in support of HB 4077. This bill comes out of an interim workgroup to improve workplace injury reporting in Oregon schools. Over the past year, I've heard from classified staff across Oregon that the current process is inconsistent, inadequate and often not accessible.

As a result, employees don't always go through the process to document injuries. This can lead to gaps in benefits to which they are entitled or cause a district reporting to regulatory entities such as OSHA to be incomplete. It also means we don't have data we need to establish common sense policies to make schools safer for all adults and children. Where data is available, lack of uniformity in terminology and collection processes makes it hard to compare.

The goal of the workgroup was to create a process to establish a uniform form to report workplace incidents. The first step is to ensure incident reports are accessible and usable across the state. Later, the hope is that ODE can collect and analyze the data to inform decisions about school safety. Quality data can help us understand the settings where incidents occur and whether additional training or staffing might help to improve safety for educators and students. When complete, I hope all Oregon schools will have uniform, streamlined, effective and accessible workplace safety reporting processes.

HB 4077 is the first step in this process that gives impacted parties and technical experts the time and resource needed for detailed discussions necessary to build the reporting form. Task force and work group bills are often frowned on in a short session, but I believe this is an exception. It is essential to finding appropriate solutions to safety challenges our students, educators and families are telling us about every day. We must start this work somewhere, and there is no better time than now to do so.

Thank you again for considering my testimony and for hearing this bill.

Sincerely,

Sara