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# A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

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February 4, 2025

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire and members of the House Education Committee,

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents over 300,000 workers across the state in every sector of Oregon's economy and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 4079 to safeguard students and families.

It should go without saying that Oregon immigrants are also Oregon workers. In fact, 1 in 8 workers in Oregon is an immigrant<sup>1</sup> -- many of whom worked around-the-clock during COVID-19 to keep food on our tables, to care for our loved ones, and to keep our economy running. Without immigrants, Oregon's economy simply would not work and their families fundamentally make our communities more vibrant.

Despite this, federal guidance was rescinded in 2025 that designated schools as "sensitive areas" casting uncertainty regarding on-campus ICE actions. Consequently, federal enforcement actions have increased in the areas around schools and many schools have been forced to go into lockdown procedures in recent months. Not only does this affect students and community members, it also affects staff, many of whom are union members and members of the OR AFL-CIO.

Fundamentally, schools are hubs of learning, engagement and safety, and they must remain that way. No Oregon student should fear going to school and never coming back. Nor should any parent be scared to drop their child off at school, or any educator fearful of what might happen to them or their students on campus.

HB 4079 lays out proactive and reactive communication expectations to keep everyone safe on campus. Consistent application and communication is needed so that all students, parents and staff, regardless of which school they attend are able to be safe and informed when something happens.

This policy is part of the immigrant justice package and fundamentally about living our values as a state where no one should have to live in fear simply because of the color of their skin, where they were born, or what language they speak. However, we know that for far too many Oregonians, that constant fear is the reality of the moment we are living in and having negative consequences on people's day-to-day lives.

And that's why we're asking Legislators to use every tool in your toolbox to quell that fear as much as possible: HB 4079 brings one tangible solution to move the dial to address parts of this culture of fear in Oregon.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon>