

TO: House Committee on Education

SUBJECT: Support HB 4079 to Safeguard Students and Families

Chair Hudson and all the members of the House Committee on Education

My name is Catarina, and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am a current High school student. I am proud of having Guatemalan blood flowing through my veins. I value my community, and I love helping out when I can. I am writing in **strong support of HB 4079 to Safeguard Students and Families.**

Federal guidance designating schools as “sensitive areas” was rescinded in 2025 created uncertainty regarding on-campus ICE actions. Federal enforcement actions have increased in the areas around schools. In recent months, schools have been forced to go into lockdown procedures, sometimes several schools in a single day.

Schools are hubs of learning, engagement, and safety, and they must remain that way. Any time there is an incident involving law enforcement or unknown persons with access to weapons in or around school locations, there must be a clear process and communication.

We had past encounters with ICE enforcement entering our High school neighborhood and other schools. Our MEChA club took action, organized a safety plan for kids to get home safely without affecting their family members, and ensured everyone at our High school is safe. While taking this action, I realized that the Administration at my school was not prepared with a plan, indicating that there was no clear protocol. This makes me feel furious because a school is supposed to be a safe place. Why are kids taking charge of something they aren't supposed to? This shows why we need this bill to pass, as we do not want our future generation to struggle with a problem that doesn't belong to them. We don't want them to feel unsafe at school.

With this bill passing, we will see improvements in our schools in communicating and letting students understand what's going on and what they should do when something unexpected happens. Parents will also be notified about any ICE enforcement activity. It will help our community be more united and thrive together rather than only certain people taking action. We want our schools to always be a safe place. We had experiences with a lack of communication when my school was impacted. Other communities and people in the school probably knew what was happening, but didn't know how to help because there wasn't as much support, and the word wasn't going out.

This bill lays out proactive and reactive communication expectations to keep everyone safe. Consistent application and consistent communication are needed so that all students, parents, and staff, regardless of which school they attend, can be safe and informed when something happens in their community. Oregonians know that when we are informed, we can be stronger together.

HB 4079 is part of the 2026 Immigrant Justice Package and is backed by a broad coalition of immigrant justice advocates, civil liberties groups, unions, and community-based organizations. I urge you to support these community-led policies to protect the freedoms of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,
Catarina A.
