

Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Virginia Stapleton, and I am here today to testify in strong support of House Bill 4079.

Our public schools should be places where every student feels safe, welcome, and free to learn without fear. Right now, that is not the reality for many students and families in our communities. Here in the Willamette Valley, the daily presence of ICE in our communities has generated a deep and real fear among immigrant families and residents alike.

We are already seeing the consequences of this fear. In districts with high immigrant student populations, families are asking themselves, *"Is my child safe at school?"* Students wonder, *"Will my parents still be home when the school day ends?"* Many educators have observed students staying home or withdrawing from school altogether because of anxiety about immigration enforcement. Attendance rates are dropping, and our children — the most vulnerable among us — are bearing the brunt of this climate of fear.

HB 4079 will ensure that when federal immigration authorities enter or intend to enter public education property, school boards and governing bodies are prepared with clear, protective policies. This bill empowers schools to establish a predictable, transparent response that prioritizes student and family safety. It sends a message that Oregon values inclusive schools where fear does not keep students from learning or showing up.

We have seen what ICE is capable of through their Operation Metro Surge deployment in Minneapolis. Reports from Minneapolis-area districts describe ICE vehicles near school zones, agents following school buses, and students too afraid to come to class because they fear being stopped or separated from their families. With the threats from the Trump administration that Oregon is the next target, this legislation is more important than ever before.

Our children deserve classrooms focused on learning. Our teachers deserve schools where every student is present and engaged. And our communities deserve public education systems that protect all students, regardless of background or immigration status. When kids feel safe, they show up. When they show up, they learn. And when they learn, our whole state is stronger.

I know there are a number of bills included in the Immigrant Justice Package this session. I have written an open letter in support of this package that community members can sign onto. I will be submitting it as written testimony to the record on each of these bills and I encourage your strong support in passing this package.

I urge your strong support for House Bill 4079. Thank you.