

Submitter: Luhui Whitebear

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4079

Please see the testimony that I was unable to provide during the meeting this morning due to time constraints:

Good morning Chair Hudson and members of the House Committee on Education. My name is Luhui Whitebear and I am the chair of the Corvallis School Board. I am also the president of the Oregon School Board Members of Color Caucus. It is not unknown that federal immigration enforcement is operating in a way that violates constitutional and civil rights. And young people in K-12 schools are not immune to these brutal efforts. Nationwide families are being profiled, torn apart, and detained in ways we have not seen in recent times. We see this nationally and right here in our own state as well as in our local communities, Corvallis included. These inhumane actions reflect centuries of policing of the movement of brown bodies that Indigenous people have faced since the early days of prisoner of war camps that became known as reservations and later mass deportation efforts. These are not new actions aimed at disrupting families and creating fear through federal actions. However, as a society we thought we moved past these targeted and brutal types of action.

Schools are places young people should feel safe. They should feel like they are valued. And they should be able to concentrate on their learning without fear. The presence of immigration enforcement, whether it be ICE, CBP, or those acting on their behalf, have no place in our schools or on our K1-2 properties. HB 4079 amendment-1 is one way students and families can know their schools care about them. While it cannot control what happens with judicial warrants, it can help families and students know they are being targeted by federal immigration enforcement efforts.

The direct notification to families and the ability for local districts to provide trainings to staff will help curb the fears that currently exist in our public k-12 schools. It is hoped that the policy that results from HB 4079 will allow local districts to determine how communication happens that meet their unique needs and to have the agency to not provide a schoolwide notification if it risks a family's immigration status being unintentionally known to the rest of the community. This could impact smaller districts with a low number of families that may be profiled as the ones immigration enforcement is looking for. HB 4079 amendment-1 being drafted in a way that allows this flexibility is critical to ensure the resulting policy does not cause unintended harm to the very people it is meant to protect as that risk is not worth the benefit in receiving a schoolwide notification.

Please know that the Oregon School Board Members of Color Caucus is here in support and to partner with moving forward with any future amendments. Thank you for taking the issue of immigration enforcement and its impacts on students and families in Oregon's K-12 schools seriously. Thank you for your time.