



February 5, 2026

Chair Hudson and Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon School Public Relations Association (OSPRA), a professional association representing schools, school districts, educational associations and organizations. OSPRA is a state affiliate of the National School Public Relations Association. Our network includes over 80 school communications professionals in Oregon and southwest Washington.

Our association represents school districts with enrollments ranging from 500 to 40,000 students, and education service districts that serve anywhere from 4 to 21 school districts. We serve school communications professionals across the northernmost counties of Clatsop and Columbia, and down to the southern counties of Curry and Josephine. We span across the Cascades as far as Ontario, Oregon. Our school communicators serve diverse student and family populations, representing a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. As such, we must reflect these unique communities' needs, challenges and experiences in our work. Many smaller districts have a one-person communications team or lack a dedicated communications professional to serve in this capacity. We would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of those who have fulfilled the communications role, even though it is not a core part of their staff assignment.

School communications professionals are grounded in the fundamental belief that clear, accurate and timely information supports safe schools and the continuity of learning, and builds trust within our communities. We work within existing emergency response structures, legal guidance and communication systems to ensure information is responsible and reliable.

We appreciate the collaborative work of committee members and partner organizations on the -1 amendment and want to acknowledge several areas where school operations and communication realities have already been thoughtfully incorporated.

With that said, we want to note implementation considerations for the committee's awareness.

Verification and Notification Process

Firstly, we appreciate the clarification around verification before starting the notification process. As previously discussed on the record and as reflected in other Oregon statutes, the use of "expeditiously" allows district personnel the necessary time to confirm information before notifying our communities. This clarification is necessary and aligns with how districts communicate responsibly during safety-related events.

We ask that additional recommendations be considered for the verification process. Most districts have a working relationship with local law enforcement out of necessity. This is not the case with federal immigration enforcement. A lack of verifiable information regarding their location and activity has resulted in confusion, false reports and disruption to school operations. Therefore, districts lack a process to verify reports of immigration enforcement activity in their communities and have no clear recommendations or methods for doing so.

Additionally, districts have reported receiving inaccurate or unverified information about immigration enforcement. While the bill directs that no notification be sent for unverified reports, there is a risk that community expectations may not align with operational realities. For example, if the reporting community member expects a resulting notification, districts may unintentionally erode trust when they are unable to confirm or act on unverified reports.

We also ask that the bill account for the consequences of publicly disclosing the notification process in school documents or on websites. Typically, districts share only essential information, such as an overview of standard emergency procedures and how students and families can expect to receive information without disclosing detailed operational specifics. This approach protects the integrity of safety procedures and safeguards communications and administrative staff from undue public scrutiny. In some communities, detailed disclosure could be misinterpreted as interfering with federal law or inviting public criticism.

In practice, schools must prioritize student and staff safety first, followed by communication once information is confirmed and appropriate safety measures are already underway. We ask that this bill also align with the notification expectations in existing emergency protocols to avoid confusion among building staff and unintended disruption to school operations.

Communication Systems and Tools

We welcome the acknowledgement that districts rely on robust, purposeful communication platforms and systems designed primarily to inform staff, students and families. We appreciate this committee's approach that does not prescribe a more rigid structure. We understand and acknowledge that notification to community-based providers is essential, as districts often house several partners, such as contractors, community volunteers, and personnel from education service districts, in their buildings.

We urge the same level of consideration be given to establishing communication practices when notifying community-based service providers. While most districts maintain effective systems for staff, students and families, few have real-time communication channels for affiliated community members. Contractors, volunteers and other partners often rely on separate systems that were not designed for rapid or mass notification. We support the opt-in approach included in the bill and encourage the committee to allow districts the discretion to determine the most effective communication strategy and method for reaching these audiences. This ensures notifications

can be delivered appropriately while accounting for staff capacity, existing systems and operational realities.

Scope and Proximity

We strongly urge establishing clear boundaries and expectations for scope and proximity. As aforementioned, we represent districts and communications teams that vary widely in size, staffing and community expectations.

Often, more urban districts will require emergency notifications for law enforcement in the immediate vicinity, as students and families are more likely to be impacted by surrounding activity. As such, schools likely have safety protocols based on their proximity to one another to determine which security measures are required and the type of notification to send. In contrast, schools in more rural areas may have different established protocols based on their distance. Therefore, existing safety and notification protocols should be used, and immigration enforcement activity should be made integral to them.

Lastly, we ask for recommendations and considerations to define expectations for extracurricular and school-based activities. This includes consideration of athletic and extracurricular events held outside district boundaries, such as sporting events in a neighboring district or out-of-state competitions. Again, districts typically have protocols for notifying of emergency events outside school buildings.

In summary, we recommend adopting a more localized approach to defining the scope of surrounding areas and extracurricular activities, ensuring districts can appropriately inform students, staff, families, volunteer coaches and program participants.

Additional Considerations

Our association respectfully asks this committee to give careful consideration to the following unintended consequences that may arise in implementation, particularly where notification requirements intersect with school safety and community trust.

First, while the intent of notification is to inform and protect, there is a risk that certain notifications may unintentionally increase disruption to school operations. Notifications related to immigration enforcement activity may draw individuals to school campuses in support of, or in opposition to, the activity, potentially escalating tensions and creating additional safety concerns. Schools must maintain stable learning environments while managing sensitive situations, and clear guidance, combined with local discretion, can help mitigate these risks.

From an operational perspective, districts have observed that notifications tied to major safety events can lead to increased absences in the days that follow. While this is not offered as an argument against notification, it is an important consideration based on lived experience. Schools

play a critical role in providing routine, stability, meals and access to trusted adults, and attendance disruptions can have cascading effects on students and families.

In smaller or close-knit communities, there is also a heightened risk that a school-specific notification could unintentionally lead to the identification or speculation about a student's, staff member's, or family's immigration status. Even when a notice is carefully worded, proximity and familiarity within small communities can increase the likelihood of assumptions being made about individuals, which may place them at risk. We urge clear guidance that recognizes these dynamics and allows districts' discretion to assess potential harm before issuing notifications. We believe school communications must prioritize the safety and well-being of individuals within school communities. In situations where a notification may cause more harm than benefit—particularly if it risks exposing or speculating about an individual's immigration status—we urge districts to retain the ability to make determinations in the best interests of impacted students, families and staff.

We note the potential for communications about immigration enforcement activity to deepen divisions within communities by placing schools in the position of conveying information about highly politicized issues. Schools are intended to be safe and welcoming environments that serve all students and families, including those with differing perspectives on immigration enforcement. Additionally, notifications may be received directly by impacted families themselves, which can cause additional trauma during an already stressful situation. While some communication systems allow districts to exclude specific recipients, not all platforms support this functionality. Districts must often rely on all-or-nothing messaging tools, limiting their ability to tailor communications in a trauma-informed way. Careful implementation and local discretion are key to maintaining trust and neutrality while fulfilling communication responsibilities.

We also want to acknowledge concerns related to the well-being of school staff. Any provisions that place school personnel—particularly administrators and communicators of color—into heightened conflict, scrutiny or public pressure warrant careful consideration. Protecting staff safety and well-being is essential to sustaining effective school operations and ensuring staff can respond appropriately, strategically and in coordination with safety and legal guidance.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony and for your consideration of the operational realities faced by Oregon's schools and the professionals tasked with communicating during sensitive and high-impact situations.

Respectfully,



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Past President, Oregon School Public Relations Association (OSPRA)