

February 25, 2026

**Re: Support for HB 4079 - Safeguarding Students and Families**

Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Committee,

My name is Arielle Hacker and I am writing on behalf of Prevent Child Abuse Oregon (PCAO) in support of HB 4079, which is a critical piece of legislation to safeguard students and families.

PCAO is the Oregon chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. At PCAO, we partner closely with Oregon's community-based organizations, advocates, early childhood and family support programs, educators, health care providers, and state agencies through our statewide Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Collaborative. Our work is grounded in the understanding that child safety begins with caregiver safety, stability, and trust in systems, including our education system.

For nearly 15 years, the federal government recognized public schools as "sensitive locations" where immigration enforcement activity was prohibited by federal policy. That designation supported attendance, learning, and family engagement by reinforcing schools as safe environments. When this guidance was rescinded in 2025, it sparked fear and uncertainty for students, caregivers, and school staff. This shift has real implications in Oregon. An estimated 171,000 Oregon children have at least one parent who has immigrated to the United States ([Vera Institute](#)). For many families in Oregon, the removal of sensitive location protections fundamentally changes how safe school feels.

Schools can and should be places where children build trusted relationships, develop social and emotional skills, and experience the stability that is foundational to healthy development. Schools are uniquely positioned to strengthen protective factors that prevent violence and abuse by fostering connection, stability, and trusted relationships that buffer stress and reduce isolation.

When law enforcement or unknown persons with access to weapons are in or around school locations, clear processes and timely communication are essential to keeping children safe. From a child abuse prevention perspective, policies like HB 4079 are critical upstream strategies. When children feel unsafe at school or fear sudden separation from their caregivers, their bodies and brains shift into survival mode. Prolonged stress during these formative years can disrupt healthy brain development and emotional regulation, and negatively impact long-term health outcomes. When caregivers are afraid to send their kids to school, stress and isolation increases, and the systems meant to protect and support families become harder to access.

HB 4079 calls for proactive and reactive communication expectations to keep everyone safe. It asks for consistent application and consistent communication so that all students, caregivers and staff regardless of which school they attend, are able to be safe and informed when something happens in their community

For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of HB 4079. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your leadership in supporting Oregon's children, families, and communities.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Arielle Hacker".

Arielle Hacker

*Director of Strategic Initiatives*

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