

Testimony in support of SB 1530

Chair Bowman and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

This testimony is in support of SB 1530 which would make threatening public officials- in a way that raises an alarm about potential harm - a felony crime.

I am in my ninth year serving as a member of the Eugene 4J School Board and as a school board member, you have to make difficult and sometimes controversial, decisions, from setting or cutting budgets to laying off staff or closing schools, ensuring students and staff are safe and that schools are places for learning and growth.

When difficult decisions have to be made, there's a lot of community engagement at board meetings and sometimes media reports bring statewide and national attention. Engagement is a good thing -- but sometimes it can turn to threats to board members and to their families.

I have witnessed first-hand a fellow school board member be harassed and threatened in a way that has caused them to fear for their safety and the safety of their family. The Eugene police department was consulted and we understood these were credible threats. We paid for safety equipment to be installed in this member's home.

I have heard from many other elected school board members and other elected officials around the state who have experienced serious threats to their safety for their comments and/or votes on controversial issues.

This should not be allowed to happen. Elected officials must be protected when they are carrying out their public duties and not be subjected to harm or threats of harm.

Now more than ever, we need qualified and committed leaders to run for elected positions in all parts of government to ensure that we have a strong and well-functioning democracy and who represent our local communities. If we do not provide protections for our elected officials it will become more and more challenging to find those willing and able to serve.

SB 1530 is a good step towards ensuring some protection for volunteer school board members and hopefully will help to deter threatening behavior.

I urge you to Vote yes on SB 1530. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Judy Newman, newman_j@4j.lane.edu

