

Susan McLain
State Representative
District 29



March 15th, 2019

Dear Chair Wagner and members of the committee,

I am writing to you in support of Senate Bill 963, which would modify Oregon's definitions of allowable and prohibited restraint. While I am unable to be present for this hearing, I would like to take the opportunity to share with you why SB 963 is so important to the safety of our students, teachers, school staff and volunteers.

In my 42 years of teaching I witnessed and was involved in many incidents where students put themselves, other students, or staff in danger of physical harm. These incidents included fights between students, or outbursts from individual students who for whatever reason are sometimes unable to control or appropriately communicate their distress. Towards the end of my career, and in the years since I retired, it has seemed that incidents such as this are becoming increasingly common. Teachers, students and parents from my district and around the state paint a picture of constant disruption, and a feeling of helplessness as they watch students in distress put themselves in danger of physical harm.

While these incidents have become more common, the interpretation of legislation meant to protect vulnerable students has tied the hands of educators and administrators in supporting and assisting students in distress. My daughter in-law is a vice principal and illustrated the problem well for me with a story about her own experience. A student at her elementary school was experiencing some distress, his outburst caused the classroom to be cleared of students. While the teacher supervised the class in the hallway, the child in distress ran out of classroom and out of the school and into the road. My daughter in-law rushed after the child and had to simultaneously stop traffic and usher the child back to safety without any physical contact.

Stories like these are far too common in our public schools. Teachers and other public school staff need to have the ability to protect students and themselves. This legislation would allow teachers and education professionals to interrupt student behaviors that are dangerous to themselves or others, while protecting vulnerable students from undue force and excessive restraint. I urge you to vote in favor of SB 963 and send it to the Senate floor with a do pass recommendation.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Susan McLain". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Representative Susan McLain