

TO CHAIR WILLIAMSON, VICE -CHAIRS GORSEK AND SPRENGER AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
FROM: Karlene McDowell, Member of the American Association of University Women of Oregon
RE: Support for House Bill 2562

I write this in support of House Bill 2562.

It is frankly shocking that there is only one, one-quarter FTE State Title IX Coordinator at the Oregon Department of Education overseeing Title IX enforcement and prevention of gender-based harassment and discrimination in all of our K-12 schools. This means that school districts are on their own when developing policies for dealing with these important, sensitive issues. Our K - 12 students are also on their own in trying to deal with them. When members of AAUW of OR attempted to deliver Title IX packages to schools, we often ran into schools where the Principal didn't even know who the school's Title IX Coordinator was.

Title IX reaches a broad range of important matters, including sexual harassment and bullying, athletics, girls only classes, access to STEM and CTE programs and more. It touches not only girls but also boys, members of the LGBTQ and non-binary communities, and staff. Regardless of the breadth of the law, our state has yet to develop state-wide training programs or continuing education programs for school-site Title IX Coordinators. These school-site Title IX Coordinators also have no consistent vehicle for sharing resources or communicating with each other about the factual situations they are presented with or how to keep up with the latest best practices.

At the present time there are no sample policies about Title IX matters, or investigation toolkits (with forms for use by witnesses, writing reports, how to deal with police investigations, etc.), posters letting students and staff know about Title IX, or how schools might conduct a **self-audit to determine if their students and staff really do know what gender-based discrimination means.**

It is very unsettling that both girls and boys in the Albany schools do not know what to do or whom to tell when bullying and sexual harassment happen. It does happen. Adults know that unless they deliberately shut their eyes to the reality of what happens in the workplace, in the state capitol, in churches, in universities. If kids learn about what to do if it happens to them, they will feel more secure that the adults around them will protect them.

Our students understand the difference between adults or systems that tell them one thing but do another. Without significantly more attention being paid to authorize and actualize Title IX enforcement and compliance, and prevention of gender-based discrimination, our students will get the message — it's okay to harass, bully and take unfair advantage of others. This isn't the Oregonian way.

I urge you to support HB 2562.

Respectfully,

Karlene McDowell
Albany, Oregon