

To: Chair Williamson, Vice-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger and members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Patricia Squire, Member of the American Association of University Women of Oregon

RE: **SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 2562**

This letter is in support of House Bill 2562.

Title IX of the Civil Rights Act states that there shall be no gender discrimination in any educational institution, period. Unfortunately, many think Title IX is just about sports, because those are the cases that get attention, such as the recent case in Lake Oswego. But, it is about any gender discrimination, including harassment, bullying, and outright sexual assault. Those are the kinds of things that negatively impact students trying to get an education.

In Oregon, apparently Title IX is not taken seriously. Right now, there is only one employee, who works one-quarter time, on all matters related to Title IX.

Each school is required to have a Title IX representative. That individual should be trained in how to develop and put procedures in place for reporting complaints, investigating complaints, and in how to devise a curriculum for healthy student relationships. Can one ¼ time employee train all of the Title IX coordinators in the state?

Without training, how can these coordinators, who most likely have another full-time job, give any attention to this important piece of school safety? No state-wide data is collected on allegations of sexual harassment or bullying, and therefore the coordinators, without training and information, are operating in the dark or not at all. Students may not even know about Title IX, or that there is a person who can help them if these discriminations occur. It is a fact that many episodes of bullying and harassment go unreported due to fear, and fear that the student will be exposed, and nothing will happen. This is not a good recipe for student success.

Oregon law says that sexual harassment will not be tolerated in Oregon schools. A ¼ time employee to handle Title IX for the entire state does not serve that law well. A basic premise of parents sending their children to school is that their child will be safe. Students cannot possibly achieve success if they are fearful of attending school. Title IX staffing needs to be fixed!

I urge you to support HB 2562. Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

Patricia Squire
Lake Oswego, Oregon