

The Wesley Foundation

A Place

of Peace



Justice

Community

March 26, 2019

Re: HB2657

To Chair Williamson and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

We are contacting you from the Wesley Foundation at the University of Oregon to support the passage of HB2657. We were begun as a United Methodist Campus Ministry, and we still have this connection. However, we are also a community that represents students and others of many faiths. We support RPE funded agencies with free space and other resources. The Wesley Center generates its own funding at this time.

Here at the Wesley Foundation, we work with countless young adults, mostly college students between the ages of 18 and 29. We support many of these young people as they attempt to heal from the trauma of sexual abuse and many forms of intimate partner violence. This support comes in many forms: food, counseling, community, and more.

It is clear from working with our students and others that educational programs dealing with violence would benefit them. Many of them have experienced violence from a family member or trusted adult. They have trouble tracking what has happened to them. Some blame themselves; others are confused as to why they were singled out. Understanding the root causes of violence and understanding the resources for survivors would enable them to seek help. This resource might save their lives; it certainly would grant them better prospects for a longer, fuller life.

A few examples of issues faced by today's college students illustrate why prevention education K-12 is so important:

- Many college students drop out due to PTSD caused by violence in their families of origin. Some still experience this violence and do not know where to turn.
- Some students re-enact violent patterns in their relationships with peers, creating sub-communities of trauma here on our campuses.

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- Most students that we have seen on campus are either high-risk for victimization or high-risk for perpetration of sexual violence. These conditions started when they were in high school, junior high, or even younger.
- The economic costs to the state are heavy: from medical and counseling costs, to loss of workers and student leaders, to homelessness.

We all know by now that prevention programs work to promote healthy relationships and teach bystander intervention skills. They promote norms change and the prevention of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and dating and interpersonal violence. For survivors, they also give an idea of what is happening to them and how to get help.

It is also true that community-based nonprofit programs, culturally specific programs, and tribal government programs are uniquely suited to implement primary prevention education in their communities.

As a Pastor of a local church, and as a campus minister, I applaud your efforts to see that all our children, youth, and young adults have an opportunity to live well. We care about everyone and want them to be safe. For those at risk of victimization, we want to provide them with resources to continue to live without the threat of sexual violence. For those who are at risk for perpetration, we want them to discover a way to live without violence, to avoid the soul-killing experience of hurting others, and to avoid having to deal with the consequences of offending.

Prevention effects everyone in a positive way. There are no losers. It is far cheaper than court costs, medical costs, and loss of income. You have done work that makes us all proud to be Oregonians. Please continue your great work in making Oregon embody the national standard for safety, for education, and for hope.

I wish you the best in your work. If I can be of further support for this bill or any help to you, please do not hesitate to call me at (541) 654-8144.

Sincerely,

Warren Light

Warren Light, Esq.

Director of the Wesley Community Center

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