



COALITION OF ADVOCATES
FOR EQUAL ACCESS
FOR GIRLS

Testimony to the House Judiciary Committee

March 29, 2019

Re: HB 2562: OR Department of Education Funding Increase To Prevent Sexual Harrassment / Bullying and Gender Based Discrimination

Honorable Co-Chairs and members of the Committee, my name is Pam Patton, I was President of the Coalition of Advocates for Equal Access for Girls for 20 years and for the past 6 years the Coalition's State and National Liaison. The Coalition is a statewide, all-volunteer, non-profit organization with a mission to ensure that the state's 1993 Equal Access Law (ORS 417.270) is implemented and that girls and young women who are involved with the State systems, including the Department of Education, receive equity in access to the gender-specific services, treatment and facilities they need to develop to their full potential. **I am writing today in support of increased ODE funding to prevent sexual harassment/bullying and gender-based discrimination.**

PROBLEM:

The current budget has only one .25 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. Here's what isn't being done:

- Each school site is required to have a Title IX -Coordinator but they receive no training about what that means or how to do their job.
- There is no statewide guidance about how to handle gender-based harassment, bullying or assault complaints.
- Communications between school-based Title IX Coordinators is difficult as there is no central mechanism to identify who they are – and in fact, many don't know they've been designated as their school's Title IX Coordinator. This also means students don't know who to go to about harassment.
- Schools have no guidance about what it means to provide access to equitable experiences for students of both sexes, including athletics or girls-only classes.
- Bullying of LGBTQ students is particularly problematic, but it isn't being sufficiently identified, nor are statewide programs to help prevent it.
- The one .25 FTE ODE Title IX Coordinator does not have sufficient time to answer all the questions that school-based Title IX Coordinators have.

There is no doubt that gender-based harassment and bullying continue at an alarming rate. The most recent Healthy Teens Survey reflects:

- When asked whether during the past 30 days they had been bullied at or on the way to school with unwanted sexual comments or attention:
 - 6.9% of 8th graders and 5.7% of 11th graders said yes.

- 6.1% of 8th graders and 2.8% of 11th graders said they had been bullied because someone thought they were gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- 2% of 11th graders had given into sexual activity when they didn't want to because of pressure.

SOLUTION:

To provide funding for at least two full time Title IX Coordinators at the OR Department of Education.

Thank you for consideration of the Coalition's recommendations.

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