

TIX Education Specialists

"Bridging compliance and best practice."

HB 4112

House Committee on Human Services and Housing

February 3, 2020

Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chairs Noble and Williams, and Members of the Committee,

TIX Education Specialists provides training, consultation, and investigation services to K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. Our focus is on Title IX as well as federal and state sexual harassment and assault laws. Our goal is to bridge compliance with evidence-based, trauma-informed best practices to help educators and school administrators serve their students best.

We are writing you today in support of HB 4112, which will increase funding to Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs), add 1.0 FTE to the schools sexual health program at the Department of Education, and fulfill a one-time funding request to conduct the Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study (OCAPS).

As a part of the statewide response system to sexual assault, we know how important it is that students are provided with appropriate support services after experiencing abuse. CACs currently take on much of this necessary and mandated work yet only receive ~17% of their funding from the state. HB 4112 is an opportunity to put an additional \$3M towards making sure Oregon's children aren't turned away from the services they need to heal and thrive.

As one provider of technical assistance to K-12 educators in this state, I can tell you that we are shorthanded. Adding an additional 1.0 FTE at ODE to support the implementation of Erin's Law will give our teachers access to much needed training on how to provide child abuse prevention education to our students and afford for the recommendation of statewide curricula. Oregon has done great work to mandate evidence-based child abuse prevention education for our students and now needs to provide the necessary funding to make sure our schools can comply with the mandates.

We know that when reports of abuse are low it is not a sign that abuse is not happening, but rather a lack of a supportive culture and resources making it possible for victims to come forward. As we put more resources towards victim advocacy, we see higher numbers of reports. Currently, Oregon depends on data collected from reported incidents to measure child abuse prevalence rates. This is concerning as reported numbers fluctuate and do not accurately represent the reality of abuse experiences. OCAPS directly asks about abuse, neglect, and other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) experienced by Oregon youth and will involve 6th and 11th/12th grade students as well as caregivers of very young children. OCAPS differs from the, also important, Oregon Student Health Survey, which focuses more on climate and student behaviors, such as alcohol and drug use. With the data obtained through OCAPS we will be able to accurately understand and craft a more effective response to and prevention of child abuse and neglect in Oregon.

For these reasons and more we urge your support for HB 4112. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Respectfully,

Sammy Brace
Policy & Communications Manager