

February 11, 2021

House Committee on Judiciary

RE: HB 2942

Dear Respected Legislators:

The purpose of this written testimony is to ask you to consider opposing HB 2942. I do that as the Assistant Superintendent of the Medford School District, and also as an educator who has served students and families in a variety of roles for 29 years as of November of this year. I have worked in and over seen Human Resources for school districts since 2004; and have served as a board member and past president for the Oregon School Personnel Association for more than eight years. In my role, I have reviewed hundreds of background checks for both staff and adult volunteers in schools, and have worked with adults who have been convicted of felonies that prevent them from either working or volunteering in schools.

Regardless of someone's history, short of a court order, having a criminal conviction does not prevent you from being a parent. You can still attend parent events, you can come to parent lunches, and you can be an active parent for your child in your local school. The question that comes to mind is under what circumstances should someone not be able to work with someone else's child? While it is true that people are not their past, individuals working schools, and primarily our teachers, are responsible for the welfare of students every minute of every day; and they primarily work alone as the sole adult responsible for making those decisions.

HB 2942 discusses removing existing prohibitions on who can be employed as an educator and work with other people's children. Those prohibitions identify many crimes that have been prohibited by the proximity of schools to limit the exposure of students to that environment and influence. The prohibitions include unlawful manufacturing of controlled substances (including methamphetamine, cocaine, etc.) within a 1000 feet of a school. The same bill discusses removing the prohibition of the delivery of those same drugs within a 1000 feet of a school or any delivery, as well as prostitution. This is not possession of drugs – this bill essentially says that a drug dealer may ultimately become a teacher.

While the bill takes the decision away from the Teacher, Standards, and Practices Commission and puts it in the hands of individual school districts; it does so by creating an arbitrary standard. While one of the support statements identifies these crimes as being correlated with substance use and abuse; as well as poverty status; this bill does not address those issues. This says to parents that the very best people we can put in front of your children are convicted drug dealers, manufactures and prostitutes is not the answer. Creating another state mandated layering of the hiring process also does not help school districts attract and retain the very best teachers to serve our children.

Finding great teachers is a national challenge. Addressing the very real issues of poverty and inequity in our state and nation is a very real challenge. This bill does not serve or address either of those issues. Please oppose HB 2942.

Respectfully submitted,



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Assistant Superintendent