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Testimony of Arthur Towers
OTLA Political Director
In Support of House Bill 2937
Before the
House Committee on Judiciary
House Subcommittee on Civil Law
February 22, 2021

Chair Power, Vice-Chair Wallan, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important legislation.

OTLA members are lawyers who fight for the rights of underdogs. In this case, our clients are younger Oregonians who are victimized by harassment at school.

This bill enhances the rights of students who face harassment and discrimination. For that reason alone, this bill should pass.

The bill takes a reasonable approach to holding perpetrators accountable and incentivizes school districts to take steps to prevent harassment and minimize post-harassment cover-ups.

We thank the sponsors and proponents of the legislation for all the sensible elements of this proposal.

- Section 2 requires school districts to report incidents to the Department of Justice, and if appropriate, the State Police. This provides an outside set of eyes can watch for any sort of troubling pattern of harassment within a given school district.
- Section 3 removes barriers for students who want to transfer out of a school in which the harassment occurred.
- Section 1 creates the legal framework to ensure that families can employ their 7th Amendment constitutional right to a trial by jury if the government (in this case the school district) causes harm. This

section also provides a modicum of accountability for the parents of harassers.

As a society, we've come a long way in recognizing the prevalence of harassment and the harm that is caused by this – particularly the long-term harm inflicted on harassed children. We still have a long ways to go to make school as welcoming and including as they should be.

HB 2937 takes our state one step closer to allowing all students to attend school with dignity, free of harassment.