

JANELLE S. BYNUM
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 51



COMMUNITIES

East Portland
Damascus
Gresham
Boring
Clackamas
Happy Valley

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Good morning. Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson and Fahey, and members of the committee. My name is Janelle Bynum and I represent House District 51, which includes East Portland, Damascus, Gresham, Boring, North Clackamas, and Happy Valley. I am here to testify in support of HB 4140 and the -2 amendment.

We are living in an era in which our democracy is under attack. According to an NPR poll on January 3, 2022. 64% of Americans believe U.S. democracy is “in crisis and at risk of failing.” With so many worried about our future I am grateful that Rep. Neron is bringing this bill to ensure that we all do our part to protect our democracy. Our democracy is at its best when Oregonians can meaningfully engage with meetings, materials, and their elected officials. But when officials breach that social contract through violating Oregon’s public meeting laws it hurts everyone.

It hurts the parents trying to keep up with the school board. It hurts the reporters trying to shine a light on an important story. It hurts every child who must live through the impacts of a shift in a culture that doesn’t allow for meaningful engagement anymore. Worse of all it creates disillusionment and disengagement with politics, a fate communities of color have experienced far too much in this country.

HB 4140 is a shield of our democracy, which requires all elected officials to be trained to understand how Oregon’s public meeting laws work and it empowers the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) to investigate reports of elected officials not following Oregon meetings law. As I learned on police reform, we need training but we also need oversight. This bill does both.

Further, the -2 amendment creates a pathway for the OGEC to develop a proper training curriculum before the bill goes into effect and clarifies which non-elected school officials should be trained.

All of these steps won’t save our democracy overnight and they won’t fully allay the concerns of all Oregonians, but they are important steps for our democracy and for our officials to take. Our communities deserve to see this progress. Thus, I encourage you to support HB 4140 with the -2 amendment. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Janelle Bynum'.

Rep. Janelle Bynum