

To whom it may concern,

My name is Jane Mendoza, and I am a concerned parent, school volunteer, and youth sports coach writing in opposition of Senate Bill 820.

I take the safety of my children, the children I volunteer with and my athletes very seriously. One of the most important roles I play is to protect them as best I can from threats they are not yet capable of identifying and managing independently. Two years ago I found out very abruptly that one of my children and the athletes I was coaching had been repeatedly exposed to an athlete's parent who is a convicted sex offender. My role as a coach and mandatory reporter compelled me to further investigate so that we could determine the safest and most ethical path forward. When my coaching staff and I opened the Oregon Sex Offender Registry, we found that there was no match for the offender. It took us multiple websites, far too long, and we had to go outside of the state's resources and into the federal databases to access the information we needed. I was absolutely horrified to discover that the state of Oregon has allowed the offender to live here for many years without a risk assessment, despite the state they moved from having assessed them as a level 3 sex offender at high risk of reoffending. I should have been able to have this information at my fingertips. I should be able to trust that when I search the Oregon Sex Offender registry before allowing my young daughters to carpool, play at friends houses without me, or attend a team activity where parents are present, that the information on the registry is accurate and up to date. I shouldn't need to jump through time consuming and often tricky hoops to be sure that I'm protecting my children to the best of my ability. High risk sex offenders shouldn't be allowed to hide in plain sight because the state of Oregon is unwilling to commit the time and resources to assessing the offenders that are backlogged simply because Oregon has been lenient and slow to act. We are seen nationally as a safe haven for violent sex offenders who feel they can easily escape the ongoing consequences of their offenses because Oregon is slow to act on assessing them.

This bill will allow most offenders added to the registry before January 1st, 2014 to live here without risk assessment, but in 2015 Oregon was ranked first in the nation for sex offenders per capita, with 727 per 100,000 residents. The national average was 270 per 100,000. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, in 2008 Oregon had 14,800 sex offenders registered and living in the state and by 2015 that number had nearly doubled. Since then the backlog of unassessed offenders has grown into the tens of thousands. Is this really what we want to be known for? Is the message we want to send to the Oregonians most vulnerable to sexual violence one of apathy? The Oregon Association of Community Corrections Directors has stated that on average, offenders commit 120 sex crimes before they are arrested, and while recidivism rates vary greatly based on the nature of their crime, some studies show recidivism rates are high. Oregonians deserve to know that the state is doing what it can to protect them from sexual predators, and knowing that every single offender living in our state has been properly assessed and classified is the first, and most basic step that needs to be taken. I strongly oppose Senate Bill 820 as it allows thousands of potentially violent sex offenders to live here without assessment.

Thank you,

Jane Mendoza