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Dr. Charlene Williams
Director of the Department of Education

SB 867: Oregon Department of Education Complaints & Investigations
House Education Committee
April 15, 2025

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Zoe Larmer and I am the Government Relations Director for the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 867, which will help ensure a culture of safety in Oregon's education system. Communities across the state are grappling with a highly concerning problem: students are feeling unsafe or unwelcome in their classrooms, the very place where they should always feel a sense of belonging and be protected.

The complaint and appeals resolutions and sexual conduct investigations at ODE are important tools designed to create and maintain a culture of safety. SB 867 seeks to make these processes clearer, close identified gaps, and create better access to education for students and families.

First, SB 867 seeks to provide students who suffer discrimination with student specific services. For example, if a student loses classroom time due to discrimination, with the changes in SB 867, ODE would be able to compel the district to provide educational services, like tutoring. This is an important tool to ensure that every student has full access to the education they are entitled to.

Second, SB 867 closes an identified safety gap when it comes to sexual conduct reports involving students and seasonal contractors, agents, or volunteers. At the moment, ODE does not have authority to substantiate sexual conduct reports that involve conduct occurring outside of the service dates for a seasonal contractor, agent, or volunteer. For example, if a swim coach engages in sexual conduct with a student in April, but the coach's annual contract service dates with the district are limited to November to February, ODE does not have authority to substantiate the report. This puts students at risk because it enables school contractors, agents, and volunteers who engage in sexual conduct with students outside of their service dates to continue to work with students throughout the state of Oregon.

The remaining changes are largely technical in nature to make ODE's sexual conduct casework more efficient and the process more clear, including:

- Specifying the education providers covered under ODE's sexual conduct investigations;
- Clarifying the process related to disclosure in sexual conduct investigations;
- Granting ODE access to law enforcement records and reports for sexual conduct investigations.



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The changes offered in SB 867 have no anticipated fiscal impact. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments, and we welcome any questions you may have. We urge your support of SB 867.

Respectfully submitted,

Zoe Larmer

Government Relations Director