



April 23, 2025

Chair Kropf  
House Committee on Judiciary  
900 Court Se. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Support for SB 473**

The City of Eugene supports the passage of Senate Bill 473. This bill was heard by the legislature as [Senate Bill 92](#) during the 2013 Legislative Session, where it was voted out of Senate Judiciary committee on a unanimous vote. The City of Eugene requested that Senate Bill 92 be reintroduced based on recent activities related to threatening behavior towards public officials. SB 473A was passed out of the Senate with unanimous support on April 15<sup>th</sup>.

While the reason for Eugene to bring this bill forward is based on our local experience, within the record is a support letter with a number of jurisdictions across the state signing on, as well as support from the League of Oregon Cities. This issue is not endemic to Eugene and applies broadly to elected officials across the state.

There are current offenses: Harassment-ORS 166.065, Menacing- ORS 163.190, and Stalking- ORS 163.732, that address similar conduct but do not address specifically “public officials,” who are often targets of these crimes simply by virtue of serving the public. Additionally, as public officials, there is a heightened standard to meet for these current offenses when determining an imminent threat, rather than behavior that is considered expressive and speech-based contact. People who work for the public should feel safe reporting for work every day so that they can continue to serve the public. Within the record is a one-page comparison between the proposed Threat to Public Official offense and those of Harassment, Menacing, and Stalking.

Senate Bill 473 creates the crime of threatening a public official and provides that the crime is punishable as a Class A misdemeanor on first offense and provides that the crime is punishable as a Class C felony if a person has a prior conviction for the same offense at the time of the current offense. The bill provides for definitions of “public official”, “threatening communication”, and “immediate family”. The escalated penalties for this crime, would provide some assurance that continued threatening behavior will not be tolerated, with the prospect of potential prison time after a first conviction for this offense.

Additionally, SB 473 defines “Threatening communication” as a communication that instills in the recipient a fear that the person delivering or conveying the communication will cause imminent and serious physical injury to or the death of the recipient or the recipient’s immediate family. We believe this language incorporates previous caselaw related to speech-based threats of violence and does not run afoul of constitutional rights to otherwise lawful expressive speech.

In addition to this testimony and the materials submitted to the record via OLIS, I will include a listing of the number of threatening emails by a person in the Eugene/Springfield area related to the circuit and appeals court case that highlighted the gap in protection for elected officials.

Thank you for your time, the City of Eugene asks you to support this bill and I can answer any questions to the best of my ability.

**Table One: Threatening Emails to Public Officials in Eugene over a 2-year period.**

<b>Target Affiliation</b>	<b>Number of Emails</b>
Municipal Court Judge	71
Attorney	72
Former Defense Attorney	97
Former Lane County Probation Officer	15
Former Defense Attorney	9
City Attorney	71
Lane County District Attorney (Elected)	21
Eugene City Prosecutor	64
Lane County Counsel	95
Eugene Mayor (Elected)	56
Former Municipal Court Judge	36
Circuit Court Judge (Elected)	1
LCSO Deputy	18
Former Oregon Attorney General (Elected)	125
EPD Chief of Police	64
LCSO Sheriff (Elected)	8
EPD Officer	62
Former Lane County Probation Officer	129
Director at City Manager's Office	133
Circuit Court Judge (Elected)	45
EPD Executive Assistant	32

Respectfully,

*//submitted electronically//*

Ethan Nelson  
Intergovernmental Relations Manager