

Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Scharf, Vice-Chair Walter, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Erika Torralba, and I am submitting testimony in strong **opposition to HB 4059**.

HB 4059 changes the definition of “threatened harm” from a *substantial risk* to a *risk of severe harm likely to occur in the near future*. This shift raises the threshold for when intervention can occur, meaning adults may not be able to act until harm is both serious and almost imminent. This makes prevention significantly harder and leaves children without protection when they need it most.

Harm to a child — especially disabled children and children of color — rarely begins as something severe or obvious. It begins in small, painful moments that adults minimize but children carry deeply. These early experiences of humiliation, intimidation, isolation, or emotional injury are real forms of harm. Under HB 4059, these warning signs may not qualify for intervention, allowing them to escalate before anyone is permitted to respond.

Children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable. Many have communication differences or complex support needs that make it harder for them to report mistreatment or be believed when they do. Raising the threshold for action further disadvantages these children and increases the risk that psychological or emotional abuse will go unnoticed and unaddressed.

Families of color also face heightened barriers to protection. Implicit bias too often influences how harm is perceived, reported, or investigated. HB 4059 gives more room for those biases to determine whether a child receives help, resulting in unequal protection for the very children who already face disproportionate mistreatment.

Prevention must happen early. Waiting until harm becomes “severe” and “likely to occur in the near future” is not protection — it is delayed response. By then, the damage may already be done.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose HB 4059. Oregon’s children deserve a system that intervenes before trauma occurs, not damage control.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Erika Torralba