

Date:	February 10, 2026
To:	Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
From:	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager Tim Dooley
Subject:	SB 1516 - support

The Association of Oregon Counties, representing Oregon’s county governments, supports SB 1516. This bill adds threatening a public official to the aggravated harassment statute and is modeled on existing statutes such as menacing and stalking. It is a narrowly focused bill on criminal conduct against public officials, candidates for office, and their families, where the threats are based upon their status as a public official or candidate. This bill is very similar to SB 473 (2025), which passed the Senate unanimously.

Local elected officials play a critical role in their communities and they and their families should not be subject to threats solely because of their desire to serve their community. Creation of a deterrent or prosecutable crime is a tool in a toolbox to help lower the threat of violence that officials face today. Our colleagues at the National League of Cities did a [survey](#) in 2021 that showed 81% of local officials had experienced harassment, threats and violence, a number I do not believe has substantially changed in the last few years. It is important to attract and retain local leaders, rather than have them opt out of public life due to unaddressed criminal threats.

I want to emphasize that this is solely intended to establish a means to prosecute behavior that is already criminal in other contexts, and has no nexus to protected political speech, however heated it may be. Counties ask that you support this measure to help protect local elected and appointed officials.

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