

TESTIMONY in Support of HB 3476
Submitted to the House Committee on Judiciary
Submitted by: Oregon Title IX Coordinators
March 25, 2015

Chair Barker, Vice –Chair Olson, and members of the Committee,

The Title IX Coordinators of the seven public Oregon universities as well as the Oregon Community College Association representing the seventeen Oregon community colleges would like to provide testimony in support of HB 3476.

Institutions of higher education are tasked through Title IX and the Clery Act, as well as the recent Campus SaVE Act Amendments, to create places of learning free of sexual violence and provide students who have experienced violence with trauma-informed and survivor-centered resources. Title IX Coordinators are asked to bring their respective schools into compliance with such regulations, while doing so in a way that will serve students best. This balance of compliance and what we know to be best for survivors has not always been an easy task. HB 3476 is seen as the first step to remedying these sometimes conflicting responsibilities.

Many students who have experienced violence are left feeling powerless and look to support services that can inform them of their options while helping them regain a sense of control. Currently many students are reluctant of immediately starting an investigation and remain silent of their assaults. This makes it difficult for institutions to address the conduct, assure all students are safe and reach students who are in need of academic and support services. In allowing colleges and universities the option to provide students with privileged campus advocates, they will be informed of their options for reporting and assistance with academic accommodations and other necessary safety planning, without the fear of retaliation from peers or the assailant in a safe space.

1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted while in college. Oregon community colleges and universities are committed to a zero tolerance stance in the face of violence on Oregon campuses, as well as the practice of creating safe spaces for survivors to come forward and tell their stories in an effort to get the help they need. In addition to prevention programming and awareness building with our students, Oregon colleges and universities can help give survivors back the control taken from them, as well as provide critical services to support them in their healing through the services of trained privileged advocates. By the advocates obtaining the status of privilege, similar to counselors, the advocates may freely provide the necessary services to survivors without fear that their communications must be disclosed and the institutions will receive legal protection from disclosure when the survivors want to keep their communications with advocates confidential.

It is for these reasons that the passage of HB 3476 is a priority for the below signers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to this committee and please feel free to reach Mary Moller (503)725-9818 or mollerm@pdx.edu with any questions.

Sincerely,

Oregon Community College Association

Oregon Public Universities
Title IX Coordinator Work Group