



February 7, 2012

Dear Representative Wingard,

We are writing to request the opportunity to vote on HB 4016, which would improve the safety of Oregon students by ensuring that those in positions of trust with children—like Boy Scout Leaders, Girl Scout Leaders, and athletic coaches, are mandatory reporters of child abuse. We are all prepared to vote in favor of HB 4016 as amended by the -7 amendments, and believe that avoiding situations like those we've seen at Penn State and within the Oregon Boy Scouts should be a priority this session. In both of these situations, failure to report abuse led to more children being harmed. Sadly, the victims in these cases will live with the consequences of abuse and failure of responsible adults to report for the rest of their lives. Just in the past year, we've seen the death of an Oregon toddler who was never the subject of a child abuse investigation because no one reported their suspicions of abuse—even though several adults witnessed the child being harmed. This should be against the law.

HB 4016 has been amended to narrow the scope of volunteers impacted, and to address concerns of civil liability for organizations. As amended by the -7 amendments, HB 4016 would simply require volunteers who have direct care and control of kids to report abuse to the appropriate authorities when they become aware of it. The law would not mandate that anyone be aware of or able to diagnose subtle signs of abuse. It would simply require that those that reasonably believe a child has been harmed or that an adult has harmed or is harming child, report that to the authorities that can provide assistance to the child.

The bill is supported by the Oregon District Attorney's Association and the Oregon Community College Association.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to the opportunity to vote on this important piece of legislation that will improve the safety of Oregon kids.

Sincerely,

Sara Gelser, Co-Chair House Education Committee

Lew Frederick, Co-Vice Chair House Education Committee

Michael Dembrow

Betty Komp