

HB 2562: Issue Brief



THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION

House Bill 2562 appropriates General Fund monies to the Department of Education for Title IX enforcement and compliance, and the prevention of sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

IMPORTANCE TO AAUW PRIORITIES

This legislation (1) supports a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity and diversity; and (2) works to guarantee equality, individual rights and social justice for a diverse society.

THE ISSUE

Right now there is only one 0.25 FTE State Title IX Coordinator at the Oregon Department of Education overseeing Title IX enforcement, and prevention of gender-based harassment and discrimination in all of our K-12 schools. This bill seeks to fund 2 full-time State Title IX Coordinators. Each school, whether public or private, K-12 or post-secondary, is required to have an on-site Title IX Coordinator, but they currently receive no consistent training. There is no statewide guidance about how to handle gender-based harassment, bullying or assault complaints. Schools have no guidance about what it means to provide access to equitable experiences for students of both sexes, including athletics or girls-only classes. In short, the important work that Title IX mandates is not being done.

Title IX was groundbreaking legislation. It prohibited gender discrimination in educational institutes and programs that receive federal funding. It clearly encompasses women and girls, and also men and boys, members of the LGBTQ and non-binary community, and staff. Although perhaps best known for demanding equality in school sports, Title IX addresses every single aspect of education, from curriculum, counseling and financial assistance to marital and parental status of students, educational programs and activities, and employment.

Considerable progress has been made, but major challenges remain. Women's advancement in some areas, including computer science and engineering, has stagnated or even declined in recent years, and pregnant and parenting students are frequently subjected to unlawful policies and practices that deter them from completing their education. Bullying of LGBTQ and non-binary students is particularly problematic. Nearly half of all middle- and high-school students in the US report being sexually harassed in school.¹ In Oregon, the most recent Healthy Teens Survey indicated that, when asked about their experiences just within the past thirty days, 6.9% of eighth graders and 5.7% of eleventh graders reported having been bullied with unwanted sexual comments or attention at or on their way to school.²

A combination of appropriate policies, training and compliance is key. Title IX mandates that schools develop policies, adopt and publish guidelines against sex discrimination and provide a grievance protocol. Each school is also required to have a Title IX coordinator who serves as the primary resource in identifying sex discrimination, resolving grievances and providing equity information and training.³ To accomplish this, these coordinators themselves need to be trained and supported.

¹ Guy, Sandra, "Title IX at 45," SWE Magazine, 20 March 2017.

² Oregon 2017 Healthy Teens Survey, 2017 OHT State Report, February 2018, pp. 55, 101-102.

³ The names and contact information for all Title IX coordinators across the United States can be found on the AAUW website, at <https://www.aauw.org/resource/find-your-title-ix-coordinator/>

SB 794: Issue Brief



THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Senate Bill 794 directs the Higher Education Coordinating Commission of Oregon to ask students in both two- and four-year colleges whether or not they are parents, along with data already included about their ethnicity and their income.

IMPORTANCE TO AAUW PRIORITIES

This legislation (1) supports a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity and diversity; and (2) helps to achieve economic self-sufficiency for all women.

THE ISSUE

Receiving a college degree is one of the best investments that a parent can make to improve her financial security, achieve social mobility and raise children who are more likely to complete school themselves. However, according to national data, college students who have children are twice as likely to drop out as those without children.⁴ This affects over one-quarter of all college students, almost half of whom are African American female undergraduates.⁵ In addition, a large share of student parents are single mothers (43% in 2016), 90% of whom live with low incomes. Obstacles to their successful matriculation include insufficient financial support, inaccessibility of child care, “time poverty”⁶ and a lack of campus programs specifically designed to help parents succeed.

A number of policy interventions could be taken at campus, state and federal levels, but this policy needs first to be informed by the necessary demographic data.

More campus child care facilities are critical, particularly now when their numbers are declining.⁷ Course load requirements for student aid could be reduced. Student parents could have priority enrollment to ensure that they get the courses they need to graduate. Financial aid calculations are supposed to include child care expenses but rarely do so because the data are lacking. Federal financial aid policies could be changed to allow the living expenses of a student’s dependent children to be included in the cost of college attendance. And there are many more possibilities to design policies to support these parents.

The first step for all of these actions is to determine how many student parents are enrolled and in which Oregon institutions of higher learning.

⁴ Wladis, Claire, “Early Education,” The Hechinger Report, July 24, 2018.

⁵ “Building Family-Friendly Campuses: Strategies to Promote College Success Among Student Parents,” Higher Education Today, June 12, 2017.

⁶ “‘Time Poverty’ of Students Who are Parents,” Inside Higher Ed, Oct 2, 2018.

⁷ “Child Care for Parents in College: A State-by-State Assessment,” Institute for Women’s Policy Research Briefing Paper #C445, Sept. 2016.