



PRESS RELEASE

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Racist Incident at High School Basketball Game Prompts Legislative Action

Bill requires interscholastic organizations to develop equitable, inclusive policies

SALEM – Interscholastic organizations would be required to update their policies to promote equality, civility, dignity and civil rights under legislation that passed the Oregon House of Representatives today.

House Bill 3409 limits school districts in Oregon from becoming a member of any organization that administers or facilitates interscholastic activities if they do not implement policies to address and transparently respond to incidents of derogatory or inappropriate behavior.

“When we send kids to play sports or participate in other activities through school, we expect that they will be treated with dignity and respect,” said chief sponsor Rep. Janelle Bynum (D-Happy Valley). “If they are not, we expect the organizers of those interscholastic events to step in and take corrective action to preserve a fair, just, and respectful environment.”

The legislation comes partially in response to an incident earlier this year where students from Parkrose High School were subjected to racist slurs during a basketball game at another school.

The legislation would specifically seek to address situations like the one experienced by the Parkrose students by requiring policies that address the use of derogatory or inappropriate names, insults, verbal assaults, profanity or ridicule that occurs at an interscholastic activity, including by spectators. When those incidents do occur, this bill would require a transparent complaint process, clear steps for organizations to appropriately respond and a system of sanctions.

“Our kids deserve to have safe places to play and compete outside of school,” said Rep. Barbara Smith Warner (D-Portland), a chief sponsor of the legislation. “This legislation is an important step in promoting the kind of respectful environment I believe everyone would want for their kids.”

Joining Rep. Bynum and Rep. Smith Warner as a chief sponsor of the legislation is House Speaker Tina Kotek (D-Portland). House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson (D-Portland), Rep. Caddy McKeown (D-Coos Bay) and Rep. Julie Fahey (D-West Eugene and Junction City) are sponsors.

The legislation, which passed the House unanimously, goes to the Oregon Senate for consideration.

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