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Safe Classrooms Legislation Headed to the Governor

Updates state laws around restraining and removing disruptive students

SALEM – Legislation to give teachers the tools they need to make classrooms safer passed the Oregon House of Representatives today. [Senate Bill 963](#) updates state laws around restraining and removing disruptive students from classrooms.

“I have seen first-hand the difficulties faced in my daughter Kohana’s school, and I have had conversations with teachers, counselors and other educators about the challenge of disruptive students,” said chief sponsor Rep. Brian Clem (D-Salem). “We need to be providing our teachers with every resource at our disposal to ensure they can both educate our children and keep them safe. As we make significant investments in our schools this year, this legislation is an important part of making our classrooms the best possible learning environments.”

In 2011, the Oregon Legislature passed legislation limiting the use of restraint and seclusion of students within schools and youth services. While the legislation worked to provide protections for students, it created ambiguity in the law for educators and administrators about how and when disruptive students could be removed from a classroom. Under current law, educators are not able to physically intervene if a student engages in activities that could be dangerous for them or other students.

Senate Bill 963 clarifies how students can be restrained when they are engaged in dangerous behaviors for themselves or others, prohibits certain types of restraints that can be unsafe, and requires districts to improve reporting when incidents do occur. The Oregon Department of Education would be responsible for holding districts accountable.

“I have heard countless stories from teachers about kids running out into the street, throwing chairs and getting into physical fights, and those teachers being unable to intervene in any real way,” said chief sponsor and retired teacher Rep. Susan McLain (D-Forest Grove). “With this legislation, we can make sure our classrooms are safe and our teachers are well equipped to do their jobs.”

Joining Rep. Clem and Rep. McLain as a chief sponsor on the legislation are Sen. Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis), Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego), Rep. Cheri Helt (R-Bend), and Rep. Greg Smith (R-Heppner). A broad bipartisan and bicameral group of 25 legislators signed on as sponsors.

The legislation, which passed 58 to 1, now goes to Gov. Kate Brown.

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