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Adi's Act will help students struggling with suicidal thoughts

SB 52: Every school district should have a policy and a plan regarding suicide

SALEM – Adi Staub came out as a transgender girl after her sophomore year of high school. Though many family members, friends and teachers were supportive, this was not always the case. The burden of ridicule from some other students and teachers became so great that Adi took her own life.

To help make sure this doesn't happen to someone else, the Oregon Senate today passed Adi's Act on a 29-0 vote. Adi's Act – or [Senate Bill 52](#) – requires school districts to adopt policies and plans to prevent youth suicides.

“SB 52 will send an important message that the lives of all our kids should be valued, respected and affirmed, no matter how they identify or who they love,” Adi's parents – Lon Staub and Christine Staub – said in written testimony supporting the bill. “Adi's Act will give stronger, more consistent policy to educate teachers, administrators and school staff on how to effectively respond to our kids at-risk for suicide.”

The bill requires that the State Board of Education adopt rules, in consultation with the Oregon Health Authority, to guide district plans. School districts can tap suicide prevention experts, as well as school employees, parents and others to help develop their suicide prevention plans.

The Staub family shared that Adi suffered from the hurtful and hateful actions of some teachers and fellow students alike. They misgendered and misnamed her, sometimes intentionally and repeatedly. She lost friendships and felt marginalized. Once a top student, Adi's grades

plummeted and she fell into depression. In a memoir for an English class in her senior year of high school, Adi made a cry for help, sharing self-destructive thoughts and stating “I often worry for my future safety.” The deeply troubling material was not shared with administrators or parents, according to the Staubs.

“Our school systems should be places of hope, optimism and inspiration for all our kids,” Lon Staub and Christine Staub wrote. “It is where they open minds and pursue passions.”

According to the most recent Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, 17 percent of eighth graders and 18 percent of 11th graders have seriously considered suicide during the previous 12 months. The Oregon Health Authority reports that 98 people 24 years or younger died as a result of suicide in 2016.

“No child should ever commit or contemplate suicide,” said Sen. Rob Wagner, D-Lake Oswego, who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “Adi suffered and her family is now suffering because a few other people refused to accept Adi for who she was. No child should go through this and they definitely shouldn’t go through hard times alone. Our schools can be ground zero for the roots of suicide – peers can be extremely cruel – and the schools should be playing a part to make sure this doesn’t happen. I am a school board member myself, and I acknowledge that we need to do better. We must do better.”

Senate Bill 52 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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