



**Testimony of Ricardo Lujan-Valerio, Policy Associate
In Support of SB 52 A – Adi’s Act
House Committee on Education
April 22, 2019**

Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ supports SB 52 A, Adi’s Act, which will require school districts to adopt a policy on student suicide prevention. Adi’s Act is essential to creating an educational environment centered on student safety, with an emphasis of assisting students prone to high risk of suicide.

We believe Adi’s Act addresses the alarming rate of youth suicide in Oregon by implementing crucial responsibilities and accountability in our schools. Prior to 2016, Oregon lost approximately 50 youth aged 10-24 to suicide each year. In the past 4 years, that number has increased to 98 young people with a projected steady increase. Furthermore, stigma and discrimination toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth have caused a higher suicide rate within those populations. Adi’s Act will provide every school district with a policy model that reflects national best practices.

Every student needs equitable and supportive services in order to feel safe when seeking help. We recognize that youth—particularly LGBTQ youth, youth with disabilities, and youth experiencing homelessness—are deeply affected by the current lack of resources needed to support them. Many times, students feel most comfortable confiding in the adults that they interact with every day, including teachers and school personnel. Adi’s Act prescribes that policies implemented by school districts must put an emphasis on highly impacted youth and allow school officials that have built a relationship with students to appropriately address their needs.

Every student in Oregon should be safe, supported, and affirmed while at school. Adi’s Act will afford school districts, especially rural districts that lack resources, a blueprint to work from to effectively impact students’ well-being and safety.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges your support on SB 52 A. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 45,000 members and supporters statewide.