To: T9PublicHearing@ed.gov
From: Audrey C. Torres

6/9/2021

Title: Written Comment: Title IX Public Hearing- Require institutions to promptly and effectively respond to, take action to eliminate, and prevent the recurrence of sex-based harassment, actions, and trauma.

Hello. My name is Audrey C. Torres and I am a Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer (fancy title for Asst. Superintendent) in More importantly, I am a woman and mother of 4 daughters and 3 granddaughters. I will be speaking to what the needs in Texas are since that is the state I am in, but the logic and necessity of the must-haves can be applied to all states and I beg that you do so.

**WE MUST** require institutions to promptly and effectively respond to, take action to eliminate, and prevent the recurrence of sex-based harassment, actions, and trauma.

How do we do this?

**WE MUST** provide training to students, parents/guardians, and employees of the school district in regards to the prevention of, to be aware of, and to properly STOP and REPORT any possible GROOMING of students and employees by authority figures or bosses. If you have never experienced or witnessed grooming, it is not as easily noticed by an untrained eye. Unfortunately for those, like me, who have not only witnessed it in a professional setting, but also experienced it as a teenage female, we most likely will notice it before others may. However, we cannot be at all places at all times. We need STUDENTS, PARENTS/GUARDIANS, and EMPLOYEES to ALL be aware of the definition, warning signs, preventive measures, specific guidelines, protocols and steps to react and to STOP, as well as reporting procedures and safety in reporting for grooming, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse.

Let me tell you, as a 16 year-old girl when I experienced grooming which led me into teen pregnancy, a marriage two weeks after I turned 17, and an abusive relationship/marriage...
having education supports and required trainings to help me understand what grooming was and how to seek help safely at school, would have saved me from several doctor visits and the continued PTSD that I as a now 47 year old woman, mother of 4 daughters, grandmother of 3 granddaughters, and educator still face when I think about my 16 year old self or witness other girls or women in similar situations.

P.S. While I have your attention, please, change ALL of the marriage age laws to 18 for males and females. No one under 18 in any state needs to be legally married to anyone or owned by anyone. And, any state where the female age is lower for consent than male is clearly stating that the protection of their girls is not a priority. STOP the loophole of the abuser not getting criminal charges or jail time by them marrying the victim. THE VICTIM does not need or want to marry the abuser in reality. If they do, then it is a pseudo want because they have been groomed or feel trapped. As was my case, and the case of many GIRLS (yes, I say girls because just because a girl has developed breasts and is nearing 18, does not mean she is yet a WOMAN… let her remain a girl as long as she can because BEING A WOMAN IS TOUGH ENOUGH WITHOUT HAVING TO BE ONE BEFORE YOU ARE LEGALLY 18). In fact, “in America, a shocking number of teenage girls are forced into marriages against their will because of legal loopholes in most states. Many believe this only happens in developing countries, but in the past 15 years, an estimated 200,000 girls have been forced into marriage in the US” (I Was a Child Bride: The Untold Story). I suggest you observe the “in-depth two-hour documentary episode, (where) Elizabeth Vargas reveals the heart-wrenching stories of child marriage victims, who against all odds, escaped the most dire of circumstances (I Was a Child Bride: The Untold Story — located on Hulu or https://www.aetv.com/specials/i-was-a-child-bride-the-untold-story)

THERE IS NO EXCUSE... STOP MAKING EXCUSES AND PROTECT OUR GIRLS!

WE MUST mandate that all schools provide mandatory training and education on grooming awareness as well as increase the SEL (Social & Emotional Learning) and Counselor/Trained Professionals available who actively observe and assist students and employees. We need counselors and trained professionals to not be consumed with state assessment data and transcripts. We need a separation of the job expectations for those cases where the counselors and trained professionals are not able to devote the time to the safety (mentally and physically) for our student and employee populations.

Let me further tell you, that as a professional woman and educator…

WE MUST increase our Title IX training, requirements, responses, and supports for all employees who may find themselves in any grooming, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and/or sexual abuse situation. WE MUST NOT just make it a click-through online training which can be ignored besides a series of enter key taps. Too many situations are being swept under the rug. Too many people (let’s be honest, mostly women) are fearful to go to Human Resources or anyone to seek help because they do not feel they will receive the support they should and they fear for their job. This is especially true if the person grooming, sexually harassing, or sexually abusing the victim is an authority figure, such as their boss. In the educational field this is even more difficult if the predator is the Superintendent of the district.
Employees do not have open access to the Superintendent’s boss because really, he does not have one, besides the school board and there are guidelines/policies which require difficult directions and timelines, specific forms too be used, and stages which can take a month or more only to be swept under the rug and ignored or dismissed. Even further the victim puts themselves and their financial stability at risk for retaliation of reporting the offenses. You may not realize how many cases there are involving a Superintendent being a predator, groomer, sexual harasser, and etc., but I can give you a prime example within my own district. I have reported him to the district for grooming, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and retaliation on anyone (myself included) who stands in his way of allowing such things to happen. My retaliation experienced for reporting is that I received threatening texts (Feb 22, 2021), a verbal assault which included him using a sexist shrill squeaky mimicking of a woman’s voice and stating that was a representation of me (Feb 23), a public Facebook Live humiliation and slander, administrative leave (Mar 3) for a fake investigation claimed by the superintendent which never occurred, to illegally denying me the right to pick up my 2 daughters after school as a punishment without reason, and my job was eliminated and split into two positions as I was replaced by two men (with far fewer certifications than I) selected by. I also was scheduled for a COVID vaccine by the district and when I showed up to the clinic, I was met by the District Police which provided me a Criminal Trespass Warning because I didn’t have the Superintendent’s permission (as they stated) to get the vaccine. Did you catch the part where I stated, I was told by the district to come to that appointment, on that date, at that time, and at that location for the COVID vaccine? I experienced a fake investigation led by the district with my grievance which included the reporting of the grooming, retaliation, and etc. THIS because the Title IX Officer for the district is weak and unsupportive, even not providing me the proper procedures and documents for a grievance when requested. THIS also because the Superintendent is the “God” of the district who has the power of “WRATH” (or so he threatened me on text asking if I wanted to hear him mad and get his wrath this evening and if I do then make the phone call to him and it would be a phone call I would NEVER forget). THIS also because districts prior have “PASSED THE TRASH” so frequently, that he has not only GROOMED, SEXUALLY HARRASSED, and RETALIATED AGAINST WOMEN IN A PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT ENVIRONMENT, but there are also proofs that he has been asked to resign in lieu of termination for sexual misconduct with female students under the age of 18, none of which he was reported to TEA, CPS, or the POLICE about supposedly. And, no resolution or justice for any of the victims he has left along his trail of districts as he has been TRASH PASSED. This has led to PTSD for his victims, including me. Interestingly though, we are in the year 2021 and some of the evidence goes back to 1998, possibly further. So, let that sink in… how many women, including myself, would have a very different experience if this man had been stopped over 20 years ago, or anytime along the way as he (the TRASH) was PASSED from district to district. What a different experience in high school the teen victims would have been allotted. Not stopping him and reporting him in the private when he resigned or in the public allowed for the victims to add up. Create deep penalties and fines for district that fail to report.
His lying on his resume for positions held (lied about being a (b)(6) and an Athletic Director) and districts worked in timeframes or omitting some districts, was allowed because there is not a system database to pull up district employment dates and notes. This man was not even certified by TEA (no alternative certification recorded on TEA Teacher Certification) to teach until after he left (b)(6) and went to (b)(6) where in (b)(6) he faced one arrest for (b)(6) and another arrest for (b)(6) at another district (according to a trusted witness) which the conviction was expunged supposedly because if you know the right people who know the right people, you can remain an educator and even become a principal, then superintendent, but still be a criminal, bully, liar, sexist, and predator.

**WE MUST** have Title IX representatives that are not tied to the school district funding or employed by such because it often clouds their judgement and loyalty. We need TEA (Texas Education Agency) funded and selected Title IX representatives assigned to districts or a series of districts depending on the population of employees and students. The separation of district control over Title IX support and investigations is necessary for true success and fairness.

And last, but not least...

**WE MUST STOP PASSING THE TRASH!** We need a system set up throughout Texas, if not the United States, which requires districts to enter the reason for resignation or termination in cases which involve any form of sexual misconduct towards anyone (student, employee, family member, etc.). We must create a system where PASSING THE TRASH becomes impossible and we STOP THIS VICIOUS RECYCLE OF TRASH! Districts need to check the system for every employee before a job is offered. This includes the positions which do not fill out the normal applications, such as a Superintendent. As you know, most Superintendents are offered to the Board to select from simply by turning in their resume to a consulting/search firm. Background checks nor even questionnaires asking about any past crimes or misconducts are rarely used.

**Boards get what they see which can be a fabrication of a resume and facade of a leader, as we received.** There needs to be clear guidelines and steps required by TEA during the superintendent application process and the due diligence expectations/actions. These steps should need to be entered into a database for further inspection by TEA and assurance that TRASH HAS NOT BEEN PASSED. These steps would have made a difference in my current experiences with being retaliated against for stopping a Superintendent’s grooming plan and not allowing for sexual harassment to continue.

To the former districts... It is NOT FAIR that you PASSED THE TRASH on to me nor my two daughters who are students in the district. It is not fair to any of the districts who were the NEXT DISTRICT.

**WE MUST STOP** allowing the predators win while the victims never fully recover.

Thank you and if you would like to further discuss the issues and evidence in regards to Superintendent (b)(6) I would be happy to do so since I am still waiting for the (b)(6) Board to do their due diligence now since they failed to do it prior to bringing in this fraudulent leader, but true predator.
Sincerely hoping a change occurs for the future generation of students... and human beings in general,

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