



February 5, 2019

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Linthicum and members of the Senate Education Committee:

Re: SB 52

Children First for Oregon supports SB 52, Adi's Act, as one step that will help provide support for youth struggling with mental health challenges within our schools. SB 52 is on the 2019 Children's Agenda and supported by numerous Children's Agenda partners.

Our partners recognize that we are at a critical juncture, and it is imperative that we find solutions to better address and support the health and well-being of our youth. The numbers are alarming. For many years in Oregon, we lost approximately 50 people aged 10-24 to suicide each year. In 2016, that number grew to 98 young people. Due to stigma, bullying, and discrimination, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth are at an even higher risk of suicide. The risk of suicide can be even greater for LGBTQ youth who live outside of the Portland region.

For all of our youth who are struggling, having just one supportive adult can greatly reduce their risk of suicide. Many times, students feel most comfortable confiding in the adults that they interact with every day, including teachers and school personnel.

Adi's Act will provide all school districts in Oregon with a model suicide prevention policy based on national best practices. In addition, all school districts will be required to have a suicide prevention policy and plan, including procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention that specifically address youth at higher risk for suicide—such as LGBTQ students, youth with disabilities, and youth experiencing homelessness.

Children First represents the interests of Oregon's 870,000 children and believes that together, with communities and leaders across the state, we can build a state where all children thrive. To achieve that vision, we must ensure that every student in Oregon feels safe, supported, and affirmed while at school. One way to ensure this is for us to develop an effective response system in our schools and create a comprehensive youth suicide prevention plan so schools can be ready with the right knowledge, tools, and resources to address the issue of youth suicide.

For these reasons, Children First calls on the Oregon legislature to pass SB 52, in addition to finding ways to better fund services in schools that support our youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this proposed legislation.

Chris Coughlin
Legislative Director