



Testimony supporting HB 2224

March 11, 2019

House Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature

Chair Doherty and Members of the committee:

I write in support of House Bill, 2224, which would invest resources for school districts to provide additional support to students and families with unmet social, emotional and behavioral health needs as well as funds to implement high-quality professional development.

We know that a growing number of our students are coming to school unprepared to learn for all kinds of reasons: they're hungry, they're homeless, or they've been the victim of some type of abuse...the list goes on and on. These adverse childhood experiences (ACES) have real impacts on our students' ability to be successful in the classroom. And in many cases, our teachers and leaders lack the competencies needed to respond to these needs. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, inadequate funding at the state level has left us unable to effectively support the growing needs of our students.

All students K-12 should be getting access to school-wide Tier 1 social emotional learning as this can prevent the need for intervention later. School counselors can support teachers and other staff in this work.

If students would benefit from Tier 3 individualized interventions- all students should have access to the culturally responsive supports needed in school and/or in the community. Currently even the providers on site in our schools end up filling up caseloads mid-year so everyone else has to leave campus for those supports – that works for some families but not others. Schools having easy access to supports to navigate systems and provide some Tier 3 interventions would be ideal.

Here are some specific examples illustrating the need for more supports in Portland Public Schools (PPS):

- Only nine of our 81 schools have a full-time school psychologist and 27

schools only have a school psychologist on site one day per week.

- We have had more than 400 suicide screenings sent in so far this school year.
- We have had more than 1,000 referrals to community mental health providers so far this school year.
- 504 plans have more than doubled in the last five years. And well over half of those are for mental health diagnoses such as anxiety, ADHD, and depression.

Our Student Success and Wellness team at PPS continues to work together with schools, families, students and community partners to create healthy and supportive school environments that promote the academic success of all students. We would be grateful for additional resources to do this important work.

Sincerely,

Brenda Martinek
Chief of Student Support Services
Portland Public Schools