

March 10, 2019

To whom it may concern:

I am contacting you to NOT support HB 2441 which I feel would endanger school counseling programs in our state.

As a high school counselor, I am a huge advocate for social workers in our schools. For many years I have advocated for each of the PPS High Schools to have a social worker. In fact, three years ago, I wrote a grant so we could have a social worker at our high school.

With that being said, I feel this proposed bill does not understand the role of school counselors or social workers in our schools. I acknowledge that social workers and school counselors sometimes have overlap in their responsibilities when it comes to mental health (i.e. working with families to get mental health resources, case management, etc.). However, social workers are NOT trained in the two other important aspects of our positions which are academic support and post high school planning.

School counselors are required to have taught or have gone through a student teacher training program. This is required for many reasons.

- 1) To meet the ASCA guidelines of a comprehensive school program, we are required to teach curriculum in ALL areas of social/emotional health, academic and post high school planning.
- 2) We work with students and families to ensure that they stay on track for graduation. We also help them navigate the educational system.
- 3) In addition, our role is critical in academic planning (i.e. classes that will be offered, etc.) and providing academic opportunities and supports for students. Without this teacher training component of my graduate program, I feel I would not have been qualified to serve as a school counselor.

I serve as the counselor representative on the Oregon ACTE Board and I have had over 24 years of experience working with students on post high school planning. If Oregon legislators are serious about preparing students for careers after high school then they need to support school counselors who have been trained in this area.

Lastly, I have heard many social workers say "We can't be a school counselor at high school but we certainly can be an elementary counselor." However, our K-8 school counselors are critical in creating the foundation of support not only for social/emotional needs but academic and career planning. I also fear that with budget cuts social workers will be placed in positions that they are neither qualified or trained.

Thank you for listening to my concerns about HB 2441. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

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