

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs

"Advocating Equality and Diversity"

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Joint Committee on Student Success
Invited Testimony
April 2, 2019, at 5pm in Hearing Room F

Co-Chairs Roblan and Smith Warner, Co-Vice-Chairs Knopp and Smith, and members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Dr. Daniel López-Cevallos, and I am the Vice Chair for Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA). I am also Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at Oregon State University (OSU). Thank you for this opportunity.

Today, I wish to convey the importance of school-based culturally and linguistically appropriate mental and behavioral health services for students and their families, pre K-12. This is an intersectional issue shared by each of the four advocacy commissions and their constituent communities, including LGBTQ. We know this is an important finding from the JCSS discussions, with students, teachers and administrators statewide, and we deeply appreciate your role in raising this issue, both as a critical need for students, including very young students and their families.

As the work of the JCSS moves forward into funding and tracking essential investments, we urge the Committee to retain its focus on mental health as a delineating factor among the most vulnerable who are dealing with adverse childhood experiences, trauma, and racial stressors children of color experience in their lives. The most successful school models reduce stigma by having mental health (MH) access and appropriate staffing readily accessible to students and their community. Culturally appropriate mental health services in schools or through contracted local providers, are essential to address community stressors and traumas and its influence on student behaviors and anxieties. Targeted investments around mental health in schools is part of achieving the success we strive for.

For OCHA, starting in 2016, in partnership with OHA and DHS, the Commission initiated the first study of Mental Health and Oregon Latinos in the past 15 years. The early results were presented to Joint Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, the Multnomah County Board, and to a packed audience of 300+ Latino community health providers at an annual meeting of the Latino Health Equity Conference. In 2019 a full report of the qualitative and quantitative data, along with urban/rural analyses, will be presented to the Legislature and the Governor by OCHA and its partners. The study reviewed Oregon usage data for MH services, broken out by race, gender, age, referral point and location for 10,000+ individuals who identified as Latino, over 10 years, statewide. Among the key findings, the study revealed the deep importance of MH services for Latino youth: a group with the highest rate of referral from school and school-based health clinics (SBHC) than any other group in Oregon.

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While the study went on to show the broad and complex mix of mental health efforts and funding for schools, the lack of a comprehensive approach has slowed access to integrated mental health services for schools statewide, in the view of the Advocacy Commissions. Participation in the Healthy Teens Survey by schools, development of trauma-informed and Social Emotional Learning practices in Early Childhood Education, and access to a variety of mental health providers in urban and rural schools, all need to be part of an integrated and comprehensive mental health plan for Oregon's students.

I would like to complete my remarks today highlighting recent research by Langley et al (2013),¹ showing that, in a multicultural school environment, parental and community engagement is key to successfully implement culturally-relevant mental health interventions. In this study, both parents and educators agreed on the importance of pre-implementation parent education, raising awareness of the impact of student mental health among educators, and maintaining ongoing communication during the intervention. Ultimately, a community partnered approach involving multiple levels of stakeholders—parents and families, school clinicians, teachers, and school administrators, will prove critical towards addressing the mental health needs of our students and their families. This in turn will contribute towards the academic success of all students.

Sincerely,



Dr. Daniel López-Cevallos
Vice-Chair, Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs

¹ Langley A, Santiago CD, Rodríguez A, Zelaya J. Improving implementation of mental health services for trauma in multicultural elementary schools: Stakeholder perspectives on parent and educator engagement. The journal of behavioral health services & research. 2013 Jul 1;40(3):247-62.