

To: Senate Committee on Rules

From: Laura Barbour, Professional School Counselor, Counselor Educator, Doctoral Candidate, OSCA President

Date: May 21, 2019

Re: Opposition to House Bill 2876-1: Coordinated Comprehensive School Counseling Program

Dear Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

I am writing to voice my concerns about House Bill 2876-1, testifying as President of the Oregon School Counselor Association. As a doctoral candidate, counselor educator, and a licensed professional school counselor with nearly 30 years of experience in education, I am in opposition of House Bill 2876.

HB 2876 has far-reaching implications on schools, students, families, licensed professional school counselors, and local school counselor education programs.

According to the Oregon Department of Education, comprehensive school counseling programs are required for districts and schools in Oregon. This bill does not match current rule for Comprehensive School Counseling (OAR 581-022-2060) that each school is required to provide a comprehensive school counseling program.

The Oregon Department of Education states that comprehensive school counseling programs are delivered by state-credentialed School Counselors, who receive specialized training to strategically develop and implement a comprehensive school counseling program, that addresses barriers to learning and promotes effective transitions by providing opportunities for each and every student to acquire and master critical skills that enable them to learn, work, interact with others, and contribute to their community (retrieved from ODE Website).

According to the American School Counselor Association, Professional School Counselors are certified/licensed educators with the minimum of a Master's degree in School Counseling who are specially educated and trained to possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to plan, organize, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive, school counseling program which addresses the academic, career and personal/social developmental needs of all students.

This bill will allow School Social Workers and other licensed professionals who are deemed "competent" to implement a school counseling program. This bill does not address the gap in education and training to implement a comprehensive school counseling program. It is my understanding that Portland State University is the only School Social Work preparation provider in Oregon. PSU has a policy around not duplicating program components therefore, School Social Worker's do not receive the same training as school counselors. These leaves a significant gap in training and expertise between Professional School Counselors and School Social Workers.

Current TSPC rule is that School Social Workers cannot be hired as School Counselors. However, I have worked with Social Workers and teachers hired in the role of School Counselors who were not educated, licensed, or trained as school counselors. It is a hardship for the people hired for a job they are unqualified for. It is a hardship for the school, administration, staff, students, and families. It is also a hardship for the school counselor colleagues who have to provide 'on the job training' for staff who are not trained to do the work. Given the scope of our work as school counselors, the practice of hiring people who are not educated, licensed, or qualified to be Professional School Counselors creates unnecessary burdens and raises ethical concerns and liabilities.

I have also had the experience of working in a District that hires mental health professionals to provide student support and outreach. These professionals consult and collaborate with School Counselors to provide mental health resources to families. These professionals are hired in addition to School Counselors to support the work of School Counselors. To meet the increasing mental health needs of our students, ideally all schools in Oregon will have Licensed Professional School Counselors and School Social Workers. However, that is not what HB 2876 proposes.

I urge that you join me in opposing HB 2876-1.

Sincerely,

*Laura Barbour*

Laura Barbour

OSCA President

OSU Doctoral Candidate

Professional School Counselor

Counselor Educator