

House Education Committee

My name is Ricky Rodriguez, and I am the athletic trainer (AT) at Springfield High school. I am writing this testimony in support of HB 4140. I have been an athletic trainer serving secondary school students in Oregon since 2005. ATs work closely within schools alongside our nurses, counselors, and teachers to manage our students' injuries. ATs work with athletic staff to provide preventative care, and we coordinate services with families and outside medical care. These examples are only a snapshot of the many ways ATs are embedded in the school system to help prevent lost seat time for students, improving attendance and supporting on time graduation (which we at Springfield High School have seen increase since adding ATs 6 years ago).

In 2005 medical providers engaged in a large paradigm shift in concussion treatment. Nearly a decade later in 2015, we at SHS realized we had to find a better way to provide concussion services not only to our student athletes but also to all students at SHS who suffer a concussion. We recognized students were falling between the cracks of academic success because they had nowhere to turn to while struggling with their symptoms post concussion injury. SHS created a comprehensive system that includes a team to manage our concussion injuries and oversee academic support systems such as immediate temporary academic accommodations and 504 plans. We provide opportunities for all staff to access continuing education regarding concussion awareness and how to differentiate instruction post injury. Our team acts from the original diagnosis (which is sometimes even determined by the AT) to coordination of full return to learning and medical clearance.

I have, in my role as an athletic trainer, led this team. I am often looked to for support by my school staff because of my expertise in concussions management. Since 2015 my team has managed over 150 students' cases. This team ensures students are getting appropriate support both inside and outside the classroom early after diagnosis, improving academic success and general wellness of our student population. As I look back on the last few years, I have success story after success story of students who never had to struggle because an AT was there leading the team and supporting each student from the beginning at diagnosis, to management of their injury.

Just one of our many students is Brynn. Brynn is an 18 year old student at Springfield. Over the fall she landed awkwardly from a tumbling routine in cheerleading practice. She saw her medical provider and was later diagnosed with a concussion. Unfortunately, she initially did not get the support she needed and stayed home for nearly 2 weeks because she was told that was best for her. Once I was made aware of the situation she was given appropriate support leading to her academic success nearly 3 months later. There were many ups and downs along the way but she had the support of her AT along the way. Recently she came to me during her cheer competition with a huge smile happy to let me know she was finally caught up just in time for finals. All students deserved having the support of an AT both on the field and off. Thank you

Ricky Rodriguez, MEd, LAT, ATC