



February 3, 2020

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee on Education:

On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, we respectfully request the committee's support of House Bill 4132, the Oregon Student Health Survey Bill. We know that the academic success of students can be impacted by many factors, including mental and physical health, adverse childhood experiences and other trauma, hunger and housing instability. We also know barriers to health care and sexual health education can impact many students from reaching their full potential, especially those from communities that are disproportionately impacted and/or marginalized. In order to support the health, well-being, and achievement of all students in every community across Oregon, our school districts need data to inform their policies and investments.

In 2019, NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon helped launch a statewide network, School Board Members for Reproductive Health, after recognizing the many challenges faced by school board members, who volunteer countless hours to support the holistic needs of their local students. We work to promote best practices, model policies, and support community outreach, however, we also recognize the unique challenges in each of Oregon's 197 school districts and 20 special education districts. We know that without localized data and analysis, we will never be able to help meet the needs of each student community across Oregon.

The Oregon Student Health Survey is an anonymous and voluntary research-based survey currently administered to 6th, 8th, and 11th grade classrooms. It is currently the only source of statewide data on school climate and the health and well-being of Oregon students and the survey provides essential data that help schools and communities focus on the things that are crucial to ensuring successful youth development, including: access to health and dental care; social/emotional wellbeing; mental health (including experiences of depression or suicidal ideation); sexual activity, STI knowledge; school safety and bullying; housing security; nutrition and physical activity; tobacco, vaping, and substance use; healthy relationships and more.

This survey data is utilized by schools, agencies, local public health authorities, and community groups to provide base-line statistics, measure progress, and make data-driven decisions to facilitate learning, promote health, and identify emerging problems that threaten the health and wellness of our students: In 2017, the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey found that 7% of Oregon 8th-graders and 6% of Oregon 11th-graders reported experiencing unwanted sexual comments or attention in the 30 days prior to the administration of the survey. About 18% of Oregon 11th-graders reported having experienced sexual coercion at some point in their lives. We also know Oregon is facing an STI epidemic. Chlamydia rates are highest among young people aged 15-24, gonorrhea

rates are on the rise as antibiotic-resistant strains become more prevalent, and syphilis rates have increased more than 2000% since 2007.¹

Also in 2017, the Oregon Health Authority Healthy Teens Survey uncovered this troubling reality for LGBTQ+ students:

- Nearly half lesbian, gay or bisexual 8th-graders have contemplated suicide.
- Close to a quarter of lesbian, gay or bisexual 8th-graders have attempted suicide.
- Almost a third of transgender 8th-graders have attempted suicide²

To increase accountability, transparency and drive effective decision-making, accurate data is needed. This is especially relevant as agencies and school districts work to implement the Student Success Act and the additional resources available to support student health and safety, mental and behavioral health support, and equity in our schools.

Currently Public Health programs at OHA pool limited programmatic dollars to fund survey administration, **however, the agency lacks capacity to provide schools and districts with meaningful feedback or technical assistance on what their school district data actually “says.”** School decision makers are often unaware that this wealth of information about their student population exists—And even if they are aware of the Student Health Survey, they may not have the tools to interpret the local findings into policy change.

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon urges the committee to vote yes on HB 4132. Without accurate data, we simply will not be able to address disparities that impact the health and safety needs of all our students. Please help us provide the critical resources necessary to help schools and communities make data-informed decisions to support current and future students by codifying and funding the Oregon Student Health Survey.

Thank you,

Christel Allen
Political Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon

1

https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/SURVEYS/OREGONHEALTHYTEENS/DOCUMENTS/2017/2017_OHT_State_Report.pdf

2

https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/SURVEYS/OREGONHEALTHYTEENS/DOCUMENTS/2017/2017_OHT_State_Report.pdf