

Chair Prusak, Vice-Chairs Salinas and Hayden, and members of the committee:

The Oregon School Nurses Association supports HB 2591. This bill provides an important tool for schools and school districts to assess the health needs of their communities. Through the planning grant process, school districts will receive support and guidance on engaging community members and partners to evaluate the gaps in healthcare access in their community, and in developing a plan to best meet those needs; either through a school-based health center or through a school nursing model.

In Oregon, many of our rural communities lack access to health care in their community. For some students who are fortunate enough to have a registered nurse in their school or district, their school nurse is the only healthcare provider they have access to during their school year. But one third of the districts in Oregon do not currently have a registered nurse in their schools, and many more of those districts also do not have access to a school based health center. Due to the demands of work and lack of transportation, families in some of these communities have to instead rely on Emergency Department visits, since taking significant time off from work to drive to a clinic is not practical for them. HB 2591 helps to address this inequity by additionally providing three communities with the opportunity to explore *mobile* health services. Oregon has existing models for mobile dental services that address a critical need for school communities with gaps in access. Piloting these mobile opportunities to include a full range of medical services through the SBHC model will provide better support for such communities.

A final important piece of this bill allows for a limited, structured pilot of the use of telehealth in the school setting in schools that already have a school nursing model and plan to hire additional nursing for the telehealth pilot, and which have access to a school based health center. Implementing school telehealth in communities with limited access to medical services will provide new opportunities to better support students when medical staff beyond school nurses cannot be physically present in a school building, when the community does not have adequate access to medical providers, and when families do not have the ability to transport their students to care providers.

HB2591 is a vital opportunity for school communities who are interested in developing or expanding access to health care to the students in their community. OSNA urges you to support HB 2591.

Sincerely,
The Oregon School Nurses Association

