



VOICES UNITED.  
OPPORTUNITY REIMAGINED.

May 12, 2021

Senate Committee on Education  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St., NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: Support for HB 2969A**

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We elevate data and lived experience to prioritize children and center communities. We continue to connect a community of 115 advocates, coalitions, and organizations through The Children's Agenda, a legislative agenda championing equitable state legislative policies and shared investments to improve the lives of Oregon's children and their families.

Through policies like Cover All Kids, Oregon has made progress to get more kids health care. But we still have work to do, which is why HB 2969A to support school-based oral health programs is part of the 2021 Children's Agenda.

There are still real barriers keeping families from getting the preventive dental care that kids need to be healthy and do well in school. And low-income children, kids of color, and children from rural communities are impacted the most by gaps in access to dental care.

- 68 percent of children living in lower income communities have tooth decay compared with 44 percent of those in higher-income areas
- Dental health disparities exist for many children in Oregon, and children of color are at higher risk for cavities; among children ages 6-9, 1 in 2 children have already had a cavity
- Less than half of American Indian or Alaska Native children, and less than half of Black children received preventative care dental services in 2018
- Oregon children in grades 1-3 in rural areas are 11 percent more likely to have cavities than children in urban areas.

**The Children's Agenda**

*is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.*



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These preventable oral health conditions can contribute to increased absenteeism, increased risk of other negative health outcomes, poor school performance, and poor self-esteem.

Preventative dental care is essential to keeping kids healthy. HB 2969A presents solutions via adding oral health education to the health curriculum that students receive, and supporting current oral health school-based programs. Specifically, HB 2969A:

- Directs the Department of Education, in consultation with oral health experts, to develop oral health curriculum standards for K-12 students when DOE next updates its health curriculum standards, expected in 2024.
- Ensures that Coordinated Care Organization (CCOs) and public health agencies can continue to support coordination of school-based dental health programs so that children participate and receive appropriate follow-up care.

Our Children Oregon urges you and your colleagues to support HB 2969A to ensure that all children in Oregon have access to oral health education.

Thank you for your consideration,

From the Our Children Oregon Team,  
Chis Coughlin, Policy, Advocacy, and Engagement Director  
Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2021 Children's Agenda at [www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-childrens-agenda](http://www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-childrens-agenda)