



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

February 22, 2021

To: **House Committee On Behavioral Health**
Chair, Representative Tawna Sanchez
Vice-Chair, Representative Raquel Moore-Green
Vice-Chair, Representative Rob Nosse

Re: **HB 2381** – Modifies laws relating to youth suicide intervention and prevention to include children under 10 years of age – **Support**

LWVUS supports efforts to secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all, to promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans and equal rights for all under state and federal law regardless of race, color gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability. LWV is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. LWVOR supports early screening (physical, dental, mental, and behavioral) for all children; early prenatal care and ongoing health care for children (physical, mental, dental); and comprehensive services for children with developmental and cognitive disabilities.

HB 2381 changes the statute relating to youth suicide to include all young people below the age of 24, rather than limiting it to ages 10 to 24. This will ensure that suicide prevention planning and intervention in Oregon will address the needs of children under 10 who will benefit from upstream prevention efforts to build resilience and social emotional skills that can prevent suicide. The bill also ensures that suicides of children under age 10 are reported to OHA and included in statewide data. This will help mental health professionals to understand the scope of this issue.

You may know that the **Senate Committee on Education** is hearing **SB 236** to eliminate expulsion of toddlers and children in early childhood programs and childcare. National data shows that Black children, Native children, and children who experience disabilities are asked to leave at disproportionately higher rates than other children. These are the same cohorts that often have higher rates of suicide and greater difficulty staying in school and graduating. Early identification and early intervention are critical. Behavioral issues are frequently the result of adverse childhood experiences or family systems stressed beyond coping. Rather than expulsion in early childhood care and education programs, these behaviors should be seen as a loud cry for help from a young child who may not have verbal or coping skills to do much more than “act out” asking for safety and security. Early childhood educators are in a position to observe and assist young children in need.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President

Chris Vogel
LWVOR Education Coordinator

Bill Walsh
LWVOR Healthcare Portfolio

CC **Senate Committee on Education**
Chair, Senator Michael Dembrow
Vice-Chair, Senator Chuck Thomsen