

**March 15, 2023**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**Re: Support SB 549**

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Naimah Johnson. I graduated from Jefferson High School in 2020 and I am currently a college student at the University of Oregon. I am currently working with the Oregon School Based Health Alliance as a Legislative Advocate Intern.

When thinking of highschoolers and health the only common knowledge that comes to mind is physicals for sports and ibuprofen when a migraine comes. Most students in high school don't realize student health centers can be used for more than these reasons.

Mental health in general has been a hard topic to cover, especially in schools. But statistically, it's needed there the most. An estimated amount of 4.1 million teens ages 12-17 experience major depression in the U.S. To lower these numbers more resources, such as School-based health centers, also known as SBHCs, in schools can offer support. During 2020-2021, 51% of SBHC visits were for behavioral health. Behavioral health encompasses mental health, substance use and behavioral health. Seeing someone and discussing painful experiences can be freeing from this hold depression has in the youth community. School-based health centers don't only support students through depression.

From personal experience I have an eating disorder that I've always had but developed fully while in quarantine. With this disorder, I began getting the proper help by talking with my therapist and peers that also have an ED. My highschool had a SBHC but the lack of knowledge of the resources the SBHC provided kept students from receiving needed support. Many questions and insecurities could have been answered earlier, especially with high school being a challenging time with growing into our bodies. A school-based health center can be that safe space for youth.

I ask you to please pass SB 549. With more funding and providers, more students will benefit from mental health support in SBHCs. I hope what I shared today left an impact with you. Moving forward I ask that we keep the conversation of mental health continuous and I look forward to mental health being prioritized.

Thank you,

Naimah Johnson