



Virginia Garcia Memorial
HEALTH CENTER

March 16, 2023

Senate Education Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Committee Members:

RE: SB 549 – School Health Crisis Response Act

Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center asks you to pass SB 549, the School Health Crisis Response Act. There is a youth mental health crisis in Oregon and your support is critical to ensuring that youth and families are able to fully access the education that every child deserves.

Virginia Garcia is a federally qualified health center, serving more than 50,000 individuals in two counties here in Oregon. We have 5 school-based health centers that serve all youth 18 and under in each of the five school districts.

The last three years have only exacerbated the challenges our youth experience every day and these barriers are even more pronounced for the communities of color that Virginia Garcia serves. Lost jobs, homelessness, food insecurity, job insecurity and extended health challenges have only provided an even more critical need for consistent, quality mental health services in our school-based health centers.

The services proposed in this bill are evidence-based and equitable approaches to addressing the mental health and behavioral issues that are impacting kids and the school environment.

We all know that healthy kids learn better. School health services support educational success and these services can be customized to meet the specific needs of a school community. They exist in urban, rural, and frontier counties. Combining a thorough assessment process with the flexibility for local control leads to the creation of services that are effective and sustainable.

Virginia Garcia appreciates your consideration of SB 549. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Gil Muñoz, CEO
Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center