

## Testimony in favor of SB549

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

My name is Wendy Niskanen, and I am the Oregon NASN Director and Project Lead for the Oregon School Nurses' Association. I write on behalf of Oregon school nurses and the students they serve. Legislation in 2019, (HB3165) created School Health Services Planning grants which ultimately resulted in the development of pilot projects which have changed the face of school nursing dramatically in Oregon. The grant process and funds facilitated conversations about the school nurse role and how to best support student physical, mental, social and emotional health needs both within districts and with community partners, including school based health centers. These conversations have had a significant positive impact on nursing teams and overarching health services models. SB549 would continue this important work.

In 2022, 27% of school districts reported no nursing services, 23% of districts reported having less than 0.5 school nurse FTE (meaning that the nurse would be available less than 20 hours a week), and the statewide nurse-to-student ratio was 1 nurse for every 2843 students. (Nursing Services in Oregon Schools Legislative Report). Grants will increase the number of school nurses, develop a better understanding of the essential role of the school nurse, and support the development of comprehensive systems which support student health in school and in the community.

Grants provided through SB549 will enable educators to identify priorities and make changes in the delivery of school health services. This will make service delivery efficient, effective, and inclusive. Coordinated health systems result in a more comprehensive support of students' physical and mental health needs, enabling a focus on preventative care and health promotion in addition to caring for students with chronic and acute medical needs. Health is inextricably tied to student readiness to learn, and health services, especially school nurses, are absolutely necessary for students to stay and succeed in school.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I encourage the committee to vote yes on SB549

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