



Date: March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Education

From: Ronnie Strode, Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland

Re: Support for School Based Health Resources, SB 549

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 549. My name is Ronnie Strode and I am a Policy Analyst with the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and Southwest Washington.

The 2022 Kids Count Data Book shares that "in the 2000s, experts estimated that 14%–20% of young people in America were experiencing a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder at any given time. Conditions for the current generation appear to be worse. The coronavirus upended everyday life to an extent not seen since World War II; millions of parents, caregivers, and other adults felt overwhelmed. U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said in 2021 there is a "mental health pandemic" for the youth."<sup>1</sup> While white households were dealing with COVID-19 pandemic challenges, households of color had to deal with those same challenges coupled with increased racism, like hate crimes and health injustices related to COVID-19 and police brutality.

The implementation of programs through grants in 10 school districts or education service districts, as outlined in this bill, will make a significant difference in the lives of students of color. This bill recognizes the importance of community involvement in the planning process, including the participation of local public health authorities, health centers, and culturally specific organizations. This inclusive approach will ensure that the needs and perspectives of communities of color are taken into consideration and that the services provided are culturally responsive.

Senate Bill 549 is an important step towards providing quality healthcare and mental health services to students of color in Oregon. It is a crucial investment in the future of our students and our state. Our schools and communities cannot afford to wait any longer. I strongly encourage the committee to support this bill and help create a better future for all of Oregon's students.

Respectfully,



**Urban League**  
of Portland

*Empowering Communities. Changing Lives.*

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