

Submitter: Jessica Williams
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

I am writing today in support of spending money from general funds to support Oregon education, especially school social workers who are helping students and families facing homelessness, food insecurity, mental health crisis and difficulty accessing education. A school social worker is a professional who is trained to provide social, emotional, and mental health support to students in a school setting. They work with students, families, teachers, and administrators to address a range of issues that impact a student's ability to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. The responsibilities of a school social worker can vary depending on the needs of the school and the community. Some of their key roles and responsibilities include:

- Providing individual and group counseling to students who are struggling with mental health challenges, such as depression, anxiety, and trauma.
- Conducting assessments and developing intervention plans for students who are experiencing behavioral issues, learning difficulties, or social challenges.
- Providing support to families who are facing challenges such as homelessness, poverty, and food insecurity, and connecting them with community resources.
- Collaborating with teachers, administrators, and other professionals to create a safe and supportive school environment that promotes positive mental health and well-being for all students.
- Conducting threat assessments to ensure the safety of students and staff and working with law enforcement and other agencies to address any potential threats.
- Providing de-escalation interventions for students in crisis in the educational setting
- Conducting suicide risk assessments and safety planning with school supports and caregivers.

I am a school social worker in the Beaverton School district. I work in an elementary school with almost 800 students. I have been with this school for 2 years and have seen the needs of the students and the community rising. Each year there are more students experiencing homelessness, housing instability, and food insecurity. At school, social workers are completing an increasing amount of suicide risk assessments, threat assessments, and sexually inappropriate behavior assessments. Social workers complete these assessments with students and work with the student's caregivers to reduce the chances that students will harm themselves or others. Social workers have specific training and expertise in working with community resources and connecting families to these resources. The work that school social workers do extends far beyond the school, not only allowing students to engage in their academic careers but keeping families in their homes, keeping students with

their families and out of DHS care, and making sure families don't go hungry.

I urge the committee to support the increase in the budget to Oregon education and school social workers in order to support our students and families facing homelessness, mental health crisis and other issues that are impacting student's abilities to reach their academic goals.