

Submitter: Briana Westenskow

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB4070

Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee:

My name is Brianna Westenskow, and I am Medical Assistant who works at the Benson School Based Health Center.

I'm writing in support of HB 4070, which provides critical resources that youth and families across Oregon need now. Oregon is ranked last in the nation for youth mental health, and it's showing in our schools through rampant behavior issues and high rates of chronic absenteeism. HB 4070 provides evidence-based resources that will be quickly available for schools to support youth mental and physical health. A study conducted in Oregon found that youth are 10-21x more likely to seek mental health support at a school-based health center (SBHC) and that SBHCs that increased mental health capacity were 12% less likely to report a depressive episode; 16% less likely to report suicidal ideation; and 18% less likely to report a suicide attempt.

I support this bill because I see first-hand every single day how valuable our services are. Our students have access to Provider appointments for mental health, reproductive health, sports physicals, injuries, and so much more, without missing more than one single class period. The access to healthcare that we provide improves patient outcomes, patient involvement, and even parental involvement. For the 2022-2023 school year we had not one single positive pregnancy test here at the Wellness Center. That is due to the outreach we do to the students to teach them about the myriad contraceptive options we have; condoms, pills, patches, depo shot, Nexplanon, and IUD. We know how important it is for our students to graduate, and graduate without a pregnancy or child. The importance of that cannot be understated. Please consider this information and know that Oregon's students greatly depend on us for care when access at other primary care clinics is severely limited.

Our youth need this now and these resources will allow for an immediate increase in our capacity to support them. I urge you to vote yes on HB 4070.

Thank you,

Brianna Westenskow, RMA