



February 5, 2024

To: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

From: Emerson Hamlin, Political Organizer, Oregon Nurses Association

Re: Support for HB 4070

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association. The Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) is a professional association and labor union representing over 17,000 nurses and healthcare professionals across Oregon. Our members work in urban and rural hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers, home health, and county health departments across Oregon.

ONA members believe that every Oregonian deserves to get the healthcare they need when they need it. Students are no exception, and for that reason, our members are very supportive of school-based health centers (SBHCs). SBHCs make it easy for every student to receive high-quality, comprehensive healthcare. SBHCs serve students of all demographics, but see an overrepresentation of students of color and Medicaid recipients, as one third of centers primarily serve students of color, and nearly half of all students served across Oregon's SBHCs are on Medicaid¹. Providing care to these students is critical, as they are more likely to encounter barriers throughout the healthcare system. Supporting SBHCs is an equitable way to strengthen Oregon's healthcare landscape.

SBHCs are not only good for student health, but for supporting their education. Kids who are not able to get necessary healthcare often stay sicker longer and miss more school due to illness. Additionally, students who go to a SBHC for an appointment miss significantly less class than their peers who go to off-campus healthcare providers.² With so many Oregon students struggling with attendance, our state should support all efforts to ensure that kids spend time learning in classrooms.

ONA urges your support of HB 4070, so that every Oregon student can easily access healthcare. Doing so will build a healthier, more educated state. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin

¹Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division, School-Based Health Center Program. "Oregon School-Based Health Centers: Status Update 2019." *Oregon Health Authority*, 2019, <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYPEOPLEFAMILIES/YOUTH/HEALTHSCHOOL/SCHOOLBASEDHEALTHCENTERS/Documents/2019SBHCStatusReport.pdf>

² Oregon Health Authority, "Oregon School-Based Health Centers: Status Update 2019."
18765 SW Boones Ferry Road, Suite 200 · Tualatin, OR 97062 · Phone: 503-293-0011 · Fax: 503-293-0013
Email: ona@oregonrn.org · Web: www.OregonRN.org