



PORTLAND
Public Schools

February 7, 2024

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, Vice-Chair Nelson, and Members of the Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare:

On behalf of Oregon's largest school district, Portland Public Schools, I write to ask for you to support HB 4151, which will establish a task force focused on expanding, sustaining, and diversifying the youth behavioral health workforce.

Oregon is struggling to meet youth mental health needs. **At 21%, Oregon has the most youth ages 12 to 17 who reported having a mental illness.** From the COVID-19 pandemic to economic challenges and significant weather events, our students and youth have been through a particularly unpredictable and tumultuous three year period, from which they are still recovering from.

There are many factors that contribute to our state's ability to deliver high quality mental health care. And trying to retain and grow a mental health workforce when workers are burnt out from serving a disproportionate number of people with severe mental health conditions only compounds these challenges.

HB 4151 will establish a youth behavioral task force that will identify opportunities to better meet the behavioral health needs of youth (0-18). This will involve supporting our current workforce and bolstering the future workforce through preparation, recruitment, support, and retention,, identifying systemic improvements, and strengthening public-private partnerships across Oregon. This is an important step for our state to take in meeting the behavioral health needs of youth. Please support HB 4151.

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Portland Public Schools