

Submitter: Jedidiah McClean
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2729
Chair Neron and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jedidiah McClean, and I am School Social Worker at Franklin HS in SE Portland, where we have an dedicated and highly impactful SBHC team.

I'm writing in support of HB 2729, which provides critical resources that youth and families across Oregon need now. Oregon is ranked 49th 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 2729 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 SBHCs provide a critical, low-barrier service option for students and families experiencing obstacles in accessing care in the community. Our SBHC mental health staff primarily serve students with OHP/Medicaid or who lack health insurance, and work through an antiracist and culturally responsive service delivery lens. Our SBHC therapist prioritizes increasing access to services for our BIPOC and LGBTQ2SIA+ students, and our nurse practitioner and behavioral health consultant are extraordinarily responsive to student and family needs, care-coordinating in a highly efficient manner that ensures as many students as possible are able to access quality care at school. The SBHC team updates our counseling office staff anytime they have a student in crisis with a safety plan, and consult biweekly in our mental health team meetings about all of their students with mental health concerns in the clinic.

In the past 9 years that I have worked at Franklin HS I have seen our SBHC's mental health therapy budget cut from 1.4 FTE down to 0.8 FTE, which resulted in shifting our culturally-specific providers to other schools (0.4 FTE Latinx specialist and 0.2 FTE Korean specialist). This loss in FTE, and specifically the loss of culturally specific providers, has had a significant impact on our school community. We have been able to advocate for private contracts with BIPOC providers to help fill the gap, but this option does not provide the same low-barrier and comprehensive healthcare-to-mental health service option that SBHC staff can provide. I hope that passing HB 2729 will provide funds for bringing culturally specific providers back into Franklin HS

and all Oregon schools with SBHCs.

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 2729.

Thank you,
Jedidiah McClean, LCSW