

Submitter: Caitlin Clark
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2729

Chair Neron and Members of the Committee:

My name is Caitlin Clark and I am licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT) working at Roosevelt High School in North Portland. I'm writing in support of HB 2729, which will assist in continuing to provide critical resources that youth and families across Oregon need now. After 11 years in my position and working in tandem with our clinic providers, I can fully attest to the importance of school based health centers and their absolutely vital services for the communities in which we work and live.

Roosevelt High School was the first school to offer a school based health center in Multnomah County. Throughout its decades of existence in our building, countless students and families have been served. I can't emphasize enough how vital this has been to supporting the work we as school employees do. I would like to provide a few examples:

For students who are missing vaccines, instead of being excluded from receiving a public education or having to navigate the process of setting up appointments outside of school, we can simply walk them to the health center to get their vaccines and then back to class. This is particularly important for students who are immigrants and often arrive without vaccinations.

For students that, for a variety reasons, have not been able to access medical care, the school based health centers offer a low barrier way to get their physical and mental health needs met.

For students that I am working with, I can easily refer them to the clinic to rule out physical causes for their mental health symptoms or for medication management. Additionally, because the clinic provides mental health care, when my caseload is full, referrals to the clinic are easy. Their providers increase our school's capacity to meet the growing need for mental health support, particularly since the pandemic.

For students who are uninsured or under insured, the clinic is there to serve them regardless in addition to helping students and families enroll in Oregon Health Plan (OHP).

It is impossible to know how many students who would have missed out on their education due to lack of access to the services provided by the school based health

clinics. The school based health clinics keep students in school and ensure that they have what they need to be safe and healthy. As Oregon has continued to struggle with chronic absenteeism and lower than average test scores, any resource that increases our students' chances of success should be fully funded and supported.

Our youth and families need the additional funding provided by HB 2729. I urge you to vote yes on HB 2729.

Thank you,
Caitlin Clark