

Submitter: David Wieland

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2729

Chair Neron and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon, I am writing in support of HB 2729, which provides critical resources to support the health and well-being of youth and families across Oregon.

Oregon ranks 49th in the nation for youth mental health, a crisis that is reflected in our schools through high rates of chronic absenteeism and behavioral challenges. At the same time, many students in Oregon face food insecurity, which can contribute to poor health outcomes, increased stress, and difficulty focusing in school. School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by providing accessible medical, mental health, and nutrition services to students who might otherwise go without care.

Research shows that youth are 10 to 21 times more likely to seek mental health support at an SBHC, and those with increased mental health capacity report significantly lower rates of depressive episodes, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts. Additionally, for food-insecure students, SBHCs can be a vital connection point for nutrition assistance and referrals to food resources, ensuring that children have the support they need to thrive in and out of the classroom.

HB 2729 is an investment in student success and well-being. By strengthening SBHCs, we are making sure that more students—especially those experiencing food insecurity—can access the care they need without barriers. We urge your support for this bill to ensure every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

David Wieland

Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon