

Chair Neron and Members of the Committee:

My name is Miki Johnson, and I am an Assistant Principal at Ventura Park Elementary School and the mother of a recent graduate of David Douglas High School, both located within the David Douglas School District.

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 I have seen the positive impacts the School Based Health Centers have had on youth within my school community. The staff at the David Douglas School Based Health Center have assisted our families with immunizations, diagnoses, medication management, and have worked hand in hand with our school to ensure that the services they provide meet the needs of our students. At Ventura Park we are working very hard to provide equitable access to learning for all of our students and the School Based Health Center has been an invaluable ally in this process. On a personal level, my child was struggling to return to in person learning in the 2021-22 school year. They accessed the school based health center who helped them identify some of the issues that were impacting their ability to stay focused in school. In addition, their mental health provider was able to help them begin to unwrap all they had been through with the covid lockdown and, eventually, get them connected to long term support. This process was even more successful thanks to the School Based Health Center being located on the David Douglas High School campus. This allowed them to continue to access their education while getting their medical and mental health needs met.

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,
Miki Johnson