

February 4, 2025

House Committee on Education

Re: Support HB 2729

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jun Orion, and I'm a high school senior in Eugene 4J School District. Throughout my years in the education system, I've struggled – and seen others struggle – with their physical and mental health. These needs have only escalated following the COVID-19 pandemic. It's high time we actively work to meet these increasing challenges in an accessible way for youth.

According to the Oregon Health Authority, the 2022 data shows that Oregon had the 12th highest youth suicide rate in the United States. In addition, the rate increased for those younger than 24 for the first time since 2018 ([Source](#)). I truly believe School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) can improve outcomes both physically, mentally, and academically for youth. In fact, the American Public Health Association endorses SBHCs, citing that they are a key component in increasing educational success by providing physical and mental health care on-site while increasing attendance rates and decreasing chronic absenteeism ([Source](#))!

Over the course of two years, I've personally seen the benefits of having an SBHC on my school campus. From leaving my classroom, receiving my yearly vaccinations, and returning in under twenty minutes, this makes prioritizing my preventive care worthwhile. Truthfully, if it wasn't for the SBHC, I would choose to skip yearly check-ups, as I had done years prior, because of the time it takes to commute to my doctor's office. Furthermore, my school's SBHC feels less intimidating and more youth-friendly, giving me the confidence I need as I move away from others managing my appointments to doing it myself. Finally, House Bill 2729 will enable schools to continue the important work they do while increasing easily accessible services for youth! For this reason, and more, I strongly urge you to pass House Bill 2729.

Let's work together to increase services for generations to come!

Thank you,

Jun Orion