

Chair Neron and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lindsey Ritts. I am a parent of a PPS student. 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**.

As a parent of two neurodivergent children, we felt it best to send one child to a private school for middle school in lieu of attending a PPS as budget cuts eliminated all school programs & health resources that can support her learning differences. We desperately need the schools to prioritize our children's health and wellness – both physical and mental health. We need a nurse at every school. Medical assistants are not equipped to handle a child with serious health issues such as anaphylactic shock. The lack of resources and support has caused many families at our school to flee from PPS. Mental & physical health are a key element in providing our children with the education & necessary resources our kids deserve.

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,

Lindsey Ritts