



2/3/25

Representative Neron and Members of the Committee,

My name is Maureen Hinman and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon School-Based Health Alliance, a non-profit that works with school-based health centers, or SBHCs, around the state.

With behavioral, attendance, and performance issues dominating discussions about Oregon's K12 education, I'm here to say that kids can't learn if they aren't healthy. We have a youth mental health crisis on our hands and educators are experiencing it in classrooms. According to the National Institutes of Health, more than half of all mental disorders in adulthood begin in childhood or adolescence, and that is without the trauma many young people experienced throughout the pandemic.

As much as I believe that educators care about their students, they are not doctors or counselors and they need outside supports in order to be able to do their jobs. The more we can create circumstances for effective partnerships between healthcare providers and schools, the better. This is where school-based health centers come in.

I have been working to develop SBHCs for the last 14 years and in that time I have seen them continue to improve the quality and breadth of services that are offered. Their responsiveness to school communities has meant they moved from primary care only to adding behavioral health and sometimes dental care. In some communities, particularly in rural areas, they are the only healthcare provider and may serve the entire community. In other words, they are valuable school partners.

They can also be a lifeline for young people. In my work with youth advocates, I met a 17-year old from Coos Bay who said that the SBHC there was the only place in his entire life he had gotten healthcare. And, I met a young person in Multnomah County who was in numerous foster care settings throughout high school and the one constant she had was the SBHC where at least she could see the same provider and counselor.

Last, but not least, SBHCs are an incredible bang for the buck. In the last Oregon Return on Investment study, SBHCs were shown to contribute \$3-4 for every dollar the state invests. Unfortunately, despite the value that they bring and quickly rising costs, SBHCs have not had an inflationary increase for over a decade.

The SBHC model is that a community provider like a community health center, hospital, or private provider runs the school clinic, but SBHCs are not money makers and with rising costs, it is getting to be a difficult investment for medical providers to make. We need SBHCs to remain viable models for community health providers to continue to offer these incredibly effective services. And it is critical they have the capacity to continue to serve the students who need them.

That is why I support HB 3169. I want to mention that I also support HB 2729 which is similar but includes a few other items of importance which you will hear about on Wednesday.

I urge you to support these bills as well and thank you for your work time and your work.

Maureen Hinman