

LISA REYNOLDS, MD
STATE SENATOR
District 17



OREGON STATE SENATE

February 5th, 2025
House Committee on Education
3:00 p.m., Hearing Room B

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson & McIntire, and Members of the House Committee on Education:

Thank you for hearing this bill today. For the record, I am Lisa Reynolds, and I represent Senate District 17 in the State Senate.

When I'm not here in Salem, I still work as a pediatrician in the Portland area, seeing patients and families from Multnomah and Washington Counties. In my clinic, I see every day that access to mental health services can truly “nip problems in the bud” contributing mightily to long term emotional health.

As a pediatrician, I also know that Oregon is facing a real shortage of healthcare providers, including those who specialize in behavioral health. We know that telehealth can “stretch” the reach of a provider, and that it is a well-tested modality. While it may not be the appropriate kind of care in every circumstance, telehealth frequently can – and frequently does – provide meaningful care at a location that is most convenient for patients or their families. For kids, this convenient location is often their schools, where they spend most of their days.

Furthermore, the Oregon Health Authority recently released their 2025 Workforce Needs Assessment, which includes some specific information and recommendations:

- Nationally, in 2023, nearly half of people ages 12 and older with any mental illness did not receive any treatment. HRSA projects a shortage of providers based on current need. (Page 61)
- This same report lists that Oregon has an average of one school psychologist for every 3,393 students, one school social worker for every 8,831 students, and one school counselor for every 461 students. This is below the recommended ratio for each provider type. (Page 12)
- The workforce report also lists on page 9 that Telehealth can potentially increase access to care—thus addressing Oregon’s health care workforce shortages—by allowing patients to connect with providers outside their home city or region. (Page 9) note that this stat is about healthcare generally, not behavioral health specific.

This is why I am here supporting HB 2577 today. I believe that the need for behavioral health services is great, and I believe that telehealth providers can help to address this critical need.

From here, I will let Hazel Health, a telehealth provider that would be eligible to contract with OHA to provide these under HB 2577 talk more about how this would work on the ground.

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