

Submitter: Sarah Hunt

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2729

“Chair Neron and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Hunt, and I am the Chair of the School Counseling Department at David Douglas High School. We are one of the largest high schools in the state of Oregon.

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 our mental health care providers at the SBHC are filling a desperate

need at DDHS. Upwards of 70% of our families qualify for free/reduced lunch and approximately 70%

of our students identify as other than white. More than 450 of our 2400 students participate in ELD

courses. All of this meaning that a large portion of our families are living with scarce resources and the clinic is often the only avenue to obtain mental health support.

They are not only assisting our students with direct service, but also supporting the school

itself by consulting on how to support those with mental health needs within the school and classroom.

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,

Sarah Hunt, Professional School Counselor, DDHS