

February 13th, 2025

Chair Frederic, Vice Chair Dobson, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Kristin Irwin and I currently serve as the Oregon State Delegate for the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). I am writing with a neutral stance on SB 314. While I fully support “grow your own” tuition reimbursement grant programs that maintain high-quality preparation standards, I am concerned the imprecise language of “any other pathways” and “nontraditional pathways” included in SB 314 may result in licensure pathways that do not preserve the high-quality preparation requirements aligned to NASP’s recommendations. NASP’s **preparation requirements ensure high-quality, comprehensive, and evidence-based mental health services for Oregon’s youth, including youth with disabilities.**

Establishing other pathways for licensure for qualified mental health providers is not in the best interest of Oregon’s youth given the **lack of evidence of alternate pathways in addressing youth suicide, depression, and anxiety.** Rather evidence-based investments are required to address shortages of qualified school-based mental health professionals while maintaining high-quality preparation standards and mental health services to students.

Oregon has the highest rate in the Nation of youth reporting serious thoughts of suicide, with **15% of Oregon’s youth between the ages of 12-17 reporting serious thoughts of suicide and 25% reporting at least one major depressive episode in the past year.** School counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers are school-based qualified mental health providers who have unique training in providing comprehensive services to meet students’ mental health needs including suicide prevention. Students are [six times more likely to access mental health services when offered in schools.](#)

There is a **significant shortage of school counselors and school psychologists in Oregon, with a ratio of [1:330](#) for school counselors and [1:1,279](#) for school psychologists** (National Recommendations School Counselors 1:250, School Psychologists 1:500, School Social Workers 1:250). These shortages are not inevitable and can be addressed through targeted investments including funding “grow your own” tuition reimbursement programs for school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers. Oregon’s youth deserve this investment.

Evidence-Based Investments:

- Increasing school psychologist training programs and program capacity including investing in hybrid programs to address shortages of school psychologists in rural areas ([NASP State Model Legislation](#)).

- Dedicating School-Based Mental Health Medicaid funds to increase the number of school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers working in schools including “grow your own” tuition reimbursement programs to diversify the workforce and lower student ratios to approach national recommendations (School Counselors 1:250, School Psychologists 1:500, School Social Workers 1:250)
- Creating an [Oregon Tuition Service Obligation Grant](#) for school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers serving high-needs school districts in Oregon
- Including school counselor, school social worker, and school psychologist National recommended ratios in Oregon’s Quality Education Model (QEM) and education funding methodology