

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sonja Newton, and I serve as a School Nurse in the Multnomah Education Service District. I have been in this role for three years, during which I have had the opportunity to provide essential health services to students while collaborating closely with the educational team.

I am writing in support of House Bill 2423, which proposes the establishment of the School-Based Health Professionals Taskforce.

As a School Nurse, I am responsible for three schools. Over the course of my career, I have observed that current licensing requirements—despite their good intentions—do not always align with the unique needs of the school environment.

For example, the greatest disconnect I see is between the school's focus on education and my focus on student health—specifically, a student's ability (or lack thereof) to access education due to a health condition. One instance that stands out is an eighth-grade student newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. He was missing an astronomical amount of school, struggling with his diagnosis, and facing new insecurities and bullying. He did not want to be in school.

My focus was on his health—creating an environment where he felt safe and heard while still accessing his education. He and his mother felt strongly about pursuing remote learning for the remainder of the school year. However, this was met with more resistance from the school administration and teachers than I expected. From my perspective, what mattered most was that he took care of his health and received an education—regardless of how or where that happened. It would have been helpful to feel that I had more say in the matter. This was just one example of the disconnect I have experienced between the school system and the role of a school nurse.

The bill's ability to improve student access to essential services would have positively impacted this student's experience, ensuring that his educational plan was centered around his individual health needs rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

I urge the committee to support HB2423 because I see no downside to ensuring that the voices of school-based health professionals—those who understand the medical complexities of students—are part of the conversation when making decisions about their education and well-being. That voice must come from those in the medical profession.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sonja Newton
School Nurse
Multnomah Education Service District