



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

DATE: March 14, 2025

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

FROM: Debra Koutnik, MD, FAAP, Behavioral Pediatric Physician
On behalf of the Oregon Pediatric Society

SUBJECT: **Testimony in Support of HB 3007: School Accommodations for
Students with a Brain Injury**

My name is Debra Koutnik, MD, and I am a Pediatrician in southern Oregon and a member of the Oregon Pediatric Society, the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I specialize in the care of children and youth with neurodevelopmental, behavioral, and mental health challenges. In this position, I have worked closely with schools in coordinating the best supports for children with these challenges so they can thrive in our Oregon schools. There is currently a gap in our supports for students returning to school with acute brain injuries.

Thus, I am writing to urge you to support HB 3007, legislation that would require schools to consider a **school reentry plan** ("Return to School Plan") for students recovering from concussions. While Oregon has already taken important steps in concussion management of physical health risks for student-athletes through Return to Play protocols, a similar standard is needed for **academic and social-emotional reintegration** to ensure students receive appropriate support during their recovery.

Each year, thousands of Oregon school children sustain brain injuries that can significantly impact a student's cognitive, emotional, and physical abilities, including their ability to concentrate, retain information, tolerate screen time or bright lights, and regulate their emotions. Research shows that students who return to full academic demands too soon are at risk for prolonged recovery, mental health struggles, and academic setbacks. Additionally, if they return to physical activity too quickly, such as recess or PE classes, they are at risk of further serious brain injury due to the brain's heightened vulnerability during the recovery period. A *Return to School Plan* provides a structured individualized roadmap, allowing students, educators, parents, and healthcare professionals to collaboratively facilitate a student's gradual reintegration into academic and social activities, while preventing symptom exacerbation, minimizing reinjury, protecting against academic failure, and avoiding social isolation, and other negative effects of brain injury.

Oregon created a standardized communication form, the Immediate and Temporary Accommodations Plan (ITAP), to facilitate a successful return to school following a head



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injury via House Bill 4140, which became effective August 2021. However, HB 4140 did not mandate the use of the ITAP or of a student evaluation process following a concussion, and schools have been slow to implement its use. Because of that, many students have gone without the necessary supports for successful school reentry. Some have experienced devastating consequences, including dropping out of school altogether.

HB 3007 would mandate student evaluation for an individualized Return to School Plan following a concussion and align Oregon with best practices recommended by the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and leading concussion experts. This legislation would ensure that students recovering from concussions receive the necessary support to reintegrate into their educational environments safely and effectively, allowing them the best chance to optimize their physical and emotional recovery.

I respectfully urge you to support this critical initiative, reinforcing Oregon's dedication to fostering the well-being and educational attainment of its youth. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Debra Kontzick, MD