

Chair Neron and Members of the Committee,

My name is Maureen Hinman, Executive Director of the Oregon School-Based Health Alliance. When students returned to schools post-pandemic, they told us that schools no longer worked for them. Mental health declined, absenteeism increased, socioeconomic factors escalated, and educators faced behavioral challenges. Parents and community partners shared these concerns, emphasizing we'd missed an opportunity for innovative change and need to address root causes.

In response, we convened nearly 50 organizations from across sectors, which agreed on Community Schools. Full service community schools are public schools that coordinate cradle to career educational, developmental, family, health, and other services through local collaboration. In the last year, a cross-sector volunteer steering committee began collaborating to determine how to create the infrastructure needed for Community Schools, ODE has staff dedicated to the work, and OHA and ODHS are actively learning. Many districts and partners, rural and urban, are ready to move forward but don't know how.

We've seen investments in great programs that align with the 6 key practices, yet coordination across them at the community level remains the critical missing piece. With schools as a natural hub, community schools can increase the effectiveness of those programs by ensuring that they are coordinated and accessible to families.

Accountability is ensured through oversight by ODE collaborating with the statewide steering committee to develop guidance, technical assistance, and external evaluation. Local steering committees composed of youth, parents, educators, and community partners drive decision-making and hold partners accountable.

This bill isn't about more money for schools; funds go to a consortium rather than one entity. It gives communities the capacity to mobilize our resources, wisdom, and commitment to children - regardless of politics.

It will help us create a structure for folks to do so not just in times of crisis, as we often do, but consistently. Please vote yes on HB 3941.

There's a song called "It Takes a Village" that comes from a West African adage and was adapted for choirs by Joan Szymko. I recently had the pleasure of hearing fifth graders (including my daughter) from three elementary schools, a middle school, and high school sing it together and it really touched me and made me think about what we are trying to do with community schools. I hope it resonates with you as well. The lyrics are as follows:

*It takes a whole village to raise our children
It takes a whole village to raise one child
We all everyone must share the burden
We all everyone will share the joy*

Thank you,

Maureen Hinman
Executive Director
Oregon School-Based Health Alliance