



March 31, 2025

OCCYSHN
Oregon Center for Children and
Youth with Special Health Needs

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Dear Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and members of the House Committee on Education,

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs (OCCYSHN) to express our **opposition to HB2052**.

Mail code CDRC
707 SW Gaines St
Portland, OR 97239

Children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) face unique barriers to regular school attendance, making them disproportionately affected by policies related to absenteeism. As Oregon's public health agency for CYSHCN, we are committed to strengthening systems that serve children and youth with special health needs.

CYSHCN are those who have, or are at risk for, physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions requiring more health and related services than their peers. Approximately **1 in 5 children in Oregon** have special health care needs. According to the 2022-23 National Survey of Children's Health, approximately **18% of Oregon CYSHCN miss 11 or more school days per year**, compared to **6% of their peers**, putting them at higher risk of chronic absenteeism, unenrollment, and, under proposed HB2052, possible fines.

CYSHCN experience a range of barriers that can hinder regular school attendance, including:

- **Health complications** such as chronic or prolonged illness, compromised immune systems, and hospitalizations.
- **Travel for specialized care** that often requires out-of-town appointments during school hours.
- **Lack of trained school staff** to meet their specific medical needs when assigned personnel are unavailable.
- **Parental concerns about safety and care**, leading families to keep their child at home.

In each of these cases, **a student would be marked absent** – making them disproportionately vulnerable to being flagged for chronic absenteeism, and potentially fined. Many Oregon families of CYSHCN experience financial hardship. Additionally, fewer than half do not receive assistance to coordinate their child's care among multiple health and service providers, and with the education system. While HB2052 does allow for exceptions to be made in the case of illness, this **puts an undue burden on the families of children with special health needs** to justify each absence and does not consider the other reasons a child or youth with special health care needs may need to miss school.



As Oregonians, we can all agree that every child deserves the opportunity to grow, develop, learn and thrive in safe and supportive communities. This includes those who experience the impacts of chronic disease and disability, and their families and caregivers. We agree that school absenteeism is of great concern in our state, and we look forward to working with leaders across Oregon to find solutions that address the root causes of the problem.

We appreciate your commitment to improving school attendance for Oregon's students and ask you to look toward the other measures that have been introduced to study policy and create programs that support increasing attendance rates. Punishing families of CYSHCN for being unable to send their children to school creates yet another hardship for these families. CYSHCN face unique challenges that must be considered when shaping chronic absenteeism policies.

We thank you for your work and dedication to the students of Oregon and urge you to vote no on this bill.

Sincerely,

Karen Benson, MA
Health and Education Project Manager
Oregon Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

Sources:

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