

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

My name is Farnosh Ghasemi I am the president elect of OSPA and am writing to you in support of HB 2596. I have worked as a school psychologist in Oregon for twenty years. My current role includes supporting the Federal Department of Education School-Based Mental Health grant for Portland Public Schools. Through this grant, we have significantly increased preventative mental health services to students by providing full-time school psychologists to Title I schools.

Oregon has the highest rate in the nation of youth reporting thoughts of suicide, with 15% of Oregon's youth reporting serious thoughts of suicide and 25% reporting at least one major depressive episode in the past year.

With specialized training in mental health and education, school psychologists serve a crucial role in improving school-wide practices and addressing academic and social-emotional needs that pose barriers to learning. They also provide essential services to students with disabilities. However, Oregon's shortage of school psychologists limits access to these critical services.

While the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommends a ratio of **1 school psychologist for every 500 students**, [Oregon's school psychologist ratio](#) is 1:1,279. Many districts and Educational Service Districts in Oregon face ratios greater than ten times the NASP recommendation, with some **exceeding 5,000 students per school psychologist**.

Oregon's shortage of school psychologists is not inevitable. It can be addressed through targeted efforts including the ICSP which promotes the movement of school psychologists from other states and prevents delays in services. By adopting HB 2596, Oregon can support this national effort and experience the benefit of attracting qualified school psychologists to Oregon. The ICSP lessens the administrative burden of licensing by creating license portability with compact states. School psychologists who have spouses in high-mobility professions (e.g., military, tech, medicine, science, etc.) directly benefit from the expedited processing of applications through the ICSP. Promoting the movement of school psychologists from other states is particularly beneficial in Oregon, as most school psychologist training programs are located in the Eastern United States, and our state currently has only two training programs. See school psychologist training program graphic below:

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The ICSP is an important step in addressing the shortage of school psychologists to support students' access to the high-quality, comprehensive services needed to meet the mental health needs of Oregon's youth. Research shows that students are [six times more likely to access mental health services in schools](#). However, additional crucial efforts are required to address youth anxiety, depression, and suicide including prioritizing funding to address shortages of 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 through 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

Through these evidence-based investments and the adoption of HB 2596, we hope the future holds improved access to qualified professionals and the comprehensive services needed to support student success.

Sincerely,
Farnosh Ghasemi

OSPA president elect