

Senate Committee on Education

March 3rd, 2021

Support of Senate Bill 580 Relating to mandatory subjects of collective bargaining.

The Oregon School Psychologists Association (OSPA), representing school psychologists in the state of Oregon, supports the passage of Senate Bill 580, relating to mandatory subjects of collective bargaining. The passage of SB 580 would empower educators to bargain for ratios that allow us to effectively meet student needs. School psychologists are highly-trained professionals dedicated to the social, emotional, mental and behavioral health of all students. If school districts are able to partner with school psychologists and other school based mental health professionals to negotiate appropriate staffing ratios, students' mental and behavioral health needs can be prioritized.

A critical component of student success is access to school-based services and resources for social, emotional and mental health needs. The demands for mental health intervention are at crisis levels for youth in Oregon. Oregon ranks 47th nationally in terms of youth mental health need and access to care. Though only 16% of children who need mental health services receive them, 80% of those who receive services do so in school settings (Baffour, 2016, para. 9). This indicates that a school-based service delivery model is both effective and equitable.. School psychologists are trained to work within school systems and meet those needs. Yet in Oregon, only 8% of schools have full-time school psychologists (Baffour, 2016). The National Association of School Psychologists recommends ratios should not exceed one school psychologist per 500 students and ratios should be lower to support students with special needs (NASP, 2010). In Oregon, our ratio state-wide exceeds one school psychologist per 2,200 students and access to school psychologists for students in rural areas is particularly impacted. This high ratio does not allow for school psychologists to practice their full range of skills.

School psychologists are mental health professionals with unique and extensive training in behavioral theory, research, statistics, evidence-based interventions, and school systems. We are trained to assist school teams in data-based decision making, and in determining precise problems, identifying solutions, and evaluating outcomes of solutions. The knowledge, training and experience we bring to school teams allows us to aid in the implementation of school-wide systems, such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and crisis intervention plans. Appropriate staffing ratios allow school psychologists to engage in a comprehensive practice model, which includes preventative work with students in kindergarten through 12th grade, completing suicide screenings, engaging students in counseling services, and working with school administrations to create welcoming, healthy school climates. The mental health needs of our students are only expected to increase as we return to school while navigating the concurrent, ongoing crises: racial injustice, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a deepening economic divide.

There is an area of the bill as introduced that we would like to address. We advocate for the inclusion of language that specifies TSPC-licensed school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors. Language that specifies TSPC-licensure ensures that students receive services from professionals who are trained to provide best practices in the school setting.

OSPA urges the passage of SB 580. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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