



April 1, 2013

Chair Greenlick and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am Jim Torrey, a member of the Eugene School Board, and I'm speaking today on behalf of the school district.

The Eugene School District strongly supports House Bill 2445. This bill recognizes the important role that school-based health centers serve in providing physical and mental health care for our children, especially those who are covered by the Oregon Health Plan or who do not have insurance coverage.

School-based health centers are a lifeline that keeps many kids in school.

- ♦ **School health centers provide mental health counseling** for depression, anger management, stress management and substance abuse. These are common problems that our young people are dealing with today and can be insurmountable without capable help that students can easily access on their own.
- ♦ **School-based health centers are child-centered.** They provide a welcoming place for students and families to get healthcare services from people that they know and trust, without needing to navigate the complexities of our healthcare system. Our centers are staffed with nurse practitioners and mental health therapists who are able to help families on-site as well as connect them to other service providers in our community.
- ♦ **School-based health centers serve students regardless of their ability to pay,** recognizing that everyone deserves quality health care, regardless of whether or not a family can qualify for or afford insurance.
- ♦ **School based health centers support student learning and academic achievement.** Having a school-based health center on a school campus allows students to get back to the classroom faster and be ready to learn. It also relieves working parents of the need to get time off work in order to accompany older students to healthcare appointments.
- ♦ **A school-based location also helps keep youth out of more costly health care settings,** such as emergency rooms, for untreated issues. School-based health centers are an effective way to achieve Oregon's goals of providing better care at lower costs for Oregon Health Plan families.

Last year in Eugene School District, more than 2,000 students were served by our school-based health centers. Many of these students would not have been able to access mental health, dental or medical services if they were not provided on our school campuses.

Throughout Oregon, community providers are partnering with school districts to deliver quality care and ensure that all youth are healthy and learning. We ask for your support to keep our school-based health centers and our students on a path to success.

House bill 2445 ensures that school-based health centers continue to be part of our state's healthcare system. By investing in our children's health, we are ensuring better outcomes in the future.