

Opposition to House Bill 3474
Submitted by Fred Yates, Lebanon, OR

Mental Health Screening and/or Assessment
(HB 3101 or HB 3474)

No matter how you word this program, whether it be mental health “screening” or “assessment” this is government intrusion, of the greatest degree, into the life of anybody, especially a young person’s private life.

Educational assessment is the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, **attitudes, and beliefs**.

Screening is the investigation of a great number of something (for instance, people) looking for those with a particular problem or feature.

Exactly what is the difference?

The criteria for “opting out” is so poorly defined that it will be easy to deny the “opt out” provision.

Neither bill prohibits screening children starting in the first grade. Is this the ultimate intent? Would a teacher allow a first grader to “opt out”? Surely they would apply pressure to coerce the child to comply so the teacher’s record would remain spotless.

If the student or their parents chose to “opt out” will that fact will be recorded and haunt the student for the rest of their life? Will they be “branded” as “non-conforming”?

What about peer pressure?

Do you remember how young people can be towards an outsider?

Do you remember the 6th through 9th grades?

Did you ever have to endure that stigmatism? Even for a short time?

If “I” chose not to take the “screening”, how will it affect all the social interactions amongst my peers?

Will “I” become a social outcast?

Then what might “I” do?

Might you have just exacerbated the problem you were trying to prevent?

Might you just “caused” another Jordyn Beckner? (Lebanon 7th grader that took her own life)

Or worse yet another Springfield, another Columbine, another Sandy Hook?

The criteria of “mental health” is so broad that it includes everything. The government is out fishing, they have no set agenda, they are “data mining” and looking to see what they can find. Will you be complicit in this activity by “volunteering” our students?

Next, when “caught” by the “screening” surely an “assessment”, or something, is soon to follow.

Collecting “data” always implies it will be analyzed and the results interpreted and distributed.

Else why do it?

Although it all sounds so simple, it is far more complex than the “experts” have even begun to fathom. Far from doing good; it could cause even more damage, more catastrophes.

The potential violations of rights to privacy, consent, and parental control are overwhelming.

Currently available screening methods for use in schools produce too many errors (e.g., false positive identifications, inappropriate over-identification of subgroups of students). A student raised in a home with a primary language other than English could easily misinterpret our English idioms and be “flagged” as having “that” problem.

There is no evidence that large scale screening has any positive effects.

Mental Health is one of those matters that should remain a domain for family, not school intervention.

There are not enough competent school personnel to plan, implement, and evaluate large-scale screening.

Where will all the funds come from to implement such a program?

Will they be taken from an already strapped school budget to implement something of questionable value? What school program will be cut next? What school maintenance will be deferred? More taxes?

Last I leave you with a short synopsis of a science fiction story I read many, many years ago.

Medical Science had finally developed the perfect, fail safe test that could define whether a person was capable of committing a horrendous crime. A bill was passed in Washington DC, which required every person in the US to submit to this test. If they tested positive, they were immediately placed in a special prison, there were no exceptions; after all it was for the good of the entire nation.

The only problem was that the President of the United States tested positive.

This committee has the chance to avert what could be a very terrible wrong. I hope and pray that you very carefully consider the path placed before you and stop this from happening.

Respectfully,
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