



DISABILITY RIGHTS OREGON

MEASURE: HB 3474 A
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S. HEALTHCARE & HUMAN SERVICES
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SUBMITTED BY: Rep. Sara Gelser

April 5, 2013

TO: Rep. Sara Gelser, Chair
House Committee on Education

FR: Bob Joondeph, DRO Executive Director

RE: HB 3474

Disability Rights Oregon supports passage of HB 3474.

General health screenings for students can play an important role in preventive care and early treatment of medical and dental problems. In the same vein, group screening for mental health and chemical dependency symptoms can make an enormous difference in indentifying needs that can be effectively addressed at an early stage.

Oregon's health care transformation process is working to integrate mental health and physical health services because of clear evidence that addressing both types of health needs improves overall well-being. Similarly, under Oregon's parity law and the mandates of the Affordable Care Act, health insurance must cover mental health services.

We at DRO recognize that stigma persists against mental health symptoms and treatment. We believe, however, that approaching routine, group mental health screening like any other health screening can help to normalize the practice while improving the health of our young people. Parents, of course, retain the right to op-out of any screening, which we feel provides adequate protection for family rights.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice support for HB 3474.



April 5, 2013

Madame Chair Gelser and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Vicki Harlos. I am licensed by the state of Oregon as both a school administrator and a clinical social worker. For the past sixteen years I have worked at Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District in Albany. I am currently assigned as the Program Administrator for Student and Family Support Services. I supervise Behavior Consultants, Family Support Liaisons and Attendance Officers who provide outreach and intervention for students, and their families, who are experiencing a wide range of barriers to their success in school, including mental health challenges.

House Bill 3474 provides our state with an opportunity to help schools and families partner to identify children and teens who struggle every day with symptoms of mental health disorders. These youth may feel tired, unhappy and depressed. They may develop low self-esteem, feel restless and irritable and may not be enjoying their young lives. They may have difficulty relating to their peers and their symptoms may be causing stress in their relationships at home. They may feel very isolated and confused by what they are experiencing. These children may not be so easily identified in a classroom setting. They may not display behavioral challenges and may go about their day without causing any disruption. They may be reluctant to talk to anyone at home or at school about their symptoms because of the negative stigma attached to mental health disorders in our society.

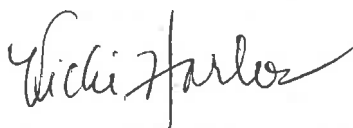
This bill would be an important step toward reaching out to these youth and identifying their challenges early so that an effective level of support and intervention can be made available to them. It would contribute to current efforts in schools and communities around our state to decrease the stigma attached to mental health disorders. Just like students and families can feel confident that their child has an opportunity to be screened for hearing and vision problems and will be respected and supported when they are identified as needing glasses or hearing aids, I hope we can move in the direction of identifying youth who are struggling with symptoms of brief or more chronic mental health conditions and ensure they experience understanding and respect for the challenges they face.

I am the Co-Chair of the Linn County Council for Integrated Services to Children and Families. Although I am not representing this inter-agency collaborative group of school superintendents and agency administrators with my testimony, I can tell you that over the past two years the mental health of youth in Linn County has become a priority for our work together. The goal of our Council is for Linn County youth to be "safe, healthy, at home, in school and out of trouble."

We are concerned about the fact that on the 2011-2012 Student Wellness Survey 23.6% of our 8th grade students reported they felt "sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row," and 17.8% of these students reported they had "seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months." In fact, we have lost two young people to suicide in Linn County over the past year. Although access to mental health screening will not guarantee we identify every student experiencing emotional distress, it is another important opportunity for us to do so.

This bill does not require schools to screen students for mental health disorders. It does not require parents to allow their child to be screened. However, it certainly simplifies the process for schools who choose to ensure youth have access to a universal health screening opportunity that may be a first step in identifying and removing a barrier to their overall healthy development and may result in significant improvement in the quality of their life. As an educator and social worker who has been involved in serving many children suffering with mental health challenges, I sincerely hope you will move to pass HB 3474.

Respectfully submitted,



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ALBANY
Democrat-Herald**Editorial: Progress in our thinking**

APRIL 18, 2013 9:00 AM • BY MIKE MCINALLY, ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD

A pilot program in Lebanon to screen seventh-graders for depression, and a legislative proposal that clarifies the rules surrounding notice of such screenings, both offer signs that we're making progress in how we think about mental illness.

In Lebanon, the school district received parental permission forms to screen between 60 and 70 of its roughly 200 seventh-graders. School officials said about 15 percent of the screened questionnaires came back indicating that the students needed some kind of assistance, and resources were made available to those students and their families.

Of particular interest to the program's organizers was that the screenings highlighted some students who weren't on anybody's radar screen for potential issues — and getting help early to those students and families may well have helped to avoid larger issues in the future.

The Lebanon program wasn't without controversy. Some Lebanon residents called the program a governmental intrusion into personal privacy.

Other school districts in the valley, in particular Corvallis, have been keeping a close eye on the Lebanon project. Although Lebanon officials said they were pleased with the results, they haven't made a decision yet about whether to do it next year.

The legislative measure, House Bill 3474, represents another worthwhile step forward in clarifying the screening procedure.

Right now, although schools in Oregon can't give depression screenings without parents' knowledge, the law doesn't specify whether parents must actively opt in to give their consent, or whether consent can be passive, with screening allowed unless a parent specifically opts out.

HB 3474, sponsored by mid-valley representatives Sara Gelser, Andy Olson and Sherrie Sprenger, would change that.

Both options still are available to schools under HB 3474, Gelser said, but in either case, the bill specifies that parents have the right to request in writing that their student not participate.

It also specifies how and when parents must receive notification. Under the bill, if a district does choose to do a screening, parents and legal guardians must receive a written, mailed notice of the screening at least two weeks before.

The notice must provide information about who will conduct the screening and who will have access to the information, none of which is currently required under the law.

The bill also prohibits any results from the screening from being included in a student's educational record. And it specifies that screening can be done only for a classroom or a specified grade, so as not to target a particular student.

Gelser said her bill has been contentious, which shouldn't be surprising considering the stigma that's still attached to mental health issues.

But if we're serious about stripping away that stigma, and finding ways to get treatment to people earlier, when it can do the most good, House Bill 3474 and the trial project in Lebanon are two solid steps in the right direction. (mm)

Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC)

Number _____

Score _____

INSTRUCTIONS

Below is a list of the ways you might have felt or acted. Please check how *much* you have felt this way during the *past week*.

DURING THE PAST WEEK	Not At All	A Little	Some	A Lot
1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.				
2. I did not feel like eating, I wasn't very hungry.				
3. I wasn't able to feel happy, even when my family or friends tried to help me feel better.	—	—	—	—
4. I felt like I was just as good as other kids.				
5. I felt like I couldn't pay attention to what I was doing.	—	—	—	—

DURING THE PAST WEEK	Not At All	A Little	Some	A Lot
6. I felt down and unhappy.				
7. I felt like I was too tired to do things.				
8. I felt like something good was going to happen.				
9. I felt like things I did before didn't work out right.				
10. I felt scared.	—	—	—	—

DURING THE PAST WEEK	Not At All	A Little	Some	A Lot
11. I didn't sleep as well as I usually sleep.				
12. I was happy.				
13. I was more quiet than usual.				
14. I felt lonely, like I didn't have any friends.				
15. I felt like kids I know were not friendly or that they didn't want to be with me.	—	—	—	—

DURING THE PAST WEEK	Not At All	A Little	Some	A Lot
16. I had a good time.				
17. I felt like crying.				
18. I felt sad.				
19. I felt people didn't like me.				
20. It was hard to get started doing things.	—	—	—	—

Name _____ Birthdate _____ Doctor _____ Today's Date _____

A Survey from Your Healthcare Provider

Part of routine screening for your health includes considering mood and emotional concerns. Instructions: How often have you been bothered by each of the following symptoms during the past two weeks? For each symptom put an "X" in the box beneath the answer that best describes how you have been feeling.

	(0) Not At All	(1) Several Days	(2) More Than Half the Days	(3) Nearly Every Day
Feeling down, depressed, irritable or hopeless?				
Little interest or pleasure in doing things?				
Trouble falling or staying asleep or sleeping too much?				
Poor appetite, weight loss, or overeating?				
Feeling tired or having little energy?				
Feeling bad about yourself --or feeling that you are a failure, or have let yourself or your family down?				
Trouble concentrating on things, like school work, reading or watching TV?				
Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Or the opposite – being so fidgety or restless that you were moving around a lot more than usual?				
Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself in some way?				

In the **past year** have you felt depressed or sad most days, even if you felt OK sometimes? Yes No

If you are experiencing any of the problems on this form, how difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home or get along with other people?

Not difficult at all Somewhat difficult Very difficult Extremely difficult

Has there been a time in the past month when you have had serious thoughts about ending your life? Yes No

Have you **ever**, in your **whole life**, tried to kill yourself or made a suicide attempt? Yes No