

SCAPPOOSE SCHOOL DISTRICT

"We prepare our students for the future"

Oregon Senate Committee on Education

March 3, 2015

Submitted by the Scappoose School District

Dear Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

The Scappoose SD is in support of Senate Bill 135 which allows the Department of Education to provide funding for educational services for students who are enrolled in day treatment program. This bill, however, does not touch the critical need for many rural districts such as ours to access these types of programs. There is currently no day treatment program in all of Columbia County. Our students and families have no options for placement and support for the significant mental health needs that are impacting our community.

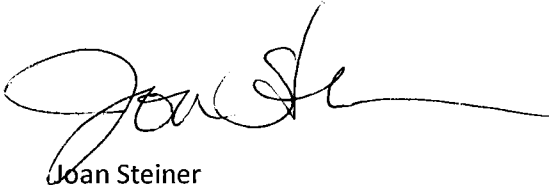
Our county currently has only one mental health provider, Columbia Community Mental Health. Although this agency is able to provide, from our perspective, a minimal amount of support, they do not currently support any of our students in accessing Day Treatment programs in neighboring counties. This has left our district to locate and pay for the entire cost of services of programs located far from our physical boundaries. It has been extremely difficult to gain access to programs and services as many are at capacity and the actual Day Treatment Programs have very few slots that can be accessed by a school district. The majority of students are placed in these programs by the mental health providers. The wait time to start a child, if we can find a program to take them, is often months.

Scappoose School District has currently placed five of our most vulnerable students in outside placements. Three are currently attending a program in Vancouver Washington because after months of searching that is the closest option that we could access. These three elementary age students have very long bus rides to and from there placement. Due to the distance, their families are extremely limited in their ability to be a part of their child's educational program. We have one HS student who is transported daily to Beaverton to attend a program. It took many months to get this placement and during the period that we were looking for options, this student who battles with depression, attempted suicide several times.

Lastly we are still waiting for a start date for a very disturbed young man for whom we have the most concern. This is a young child with significant issues that have impacted our elementary school and that we do not believe we can safely maintain in a regular school setting. We are currently staffing him 2:1 for a shortened day and continue to be concerned about the safety of all our students. We realize that we are not helping him, only keeping things contained until he can access the services he needs. When this child is finally able to start his program, he will need to travel at least an hour each way. For this student, parent and family participation are critical and will be very difficult due to the distance.

Academically, we are very confident that we can meet the educational needs of each and every one of these students. We are not able to meet their mental health needs. For each of these students, our district is paying \$40,000 to \$50,000 for tuition and additional costs for transportation which includes providing educational assistants to ride the buses during these very long rides.

As I stated earlier, The Scappoose SD supports Senate Bill 135 as these services are critical for students around our state. However, the lack of any services for multiple districts is unacceptable. We urge the committee to expand Day Treatment Programs throughout our state, specifically targeting those with geographic areas that currently have no access.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Steiner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joan Steiner

Director of Student Services