

March 18, 2015

Subject: SB 698 - *Support*

Chair Monnes-Anderson and members of the committee:

Once again, as Director of School Health Services for Multnomah ES D I am asking for your *support of SB 698*. During the past year I have had many conversations with stakeholders and community partners about my concerns related to the delivery of nursing services in the school setting. I also provided testimony on February 23, 2015.

While nurses in the school setting respond to the whole child, their interventions are primarily health related. Yet, education continues to assume fiscal responsibility for this care; care that is billable outside the school setting. During the Spring of 2014, MESD School Health Services surveyed small, medium, and large sized school districts to gather data on how much was being spent on school nursing. Approximately 23-25\$ million dollars of the education budget are being spent on nursing services in the school.

This morning I attended a meeting of new MESD nurses for this school year. They spent two hours sharing stories reflecting on the significant, yet *unknown impact* they make every day as autonomous and partner providers of health care in schools; *healthcare that keeps students safe and in school every day*.

This morning a nurse shared the story of a middle school student who was attending school while exhibiting the early signs of sepsis because of dental problems. This student had been in so much pain and discomfort that he had tried to pull out his own teeth and was chronically using a paperclip to dig at his teeth. There was not a SBHC at this school. It was the school nurse and the school counselor who gained the necessary consents and coordinated the community resources to get this student to appropriate dental care. This is a student who was not able to achieve their educational potential at that time and who would have ended up in an emergency room and potentially hospitalized for sepsis; a very costly and life threatening illness. This is one story, yet I had a list of them after two hours. These are school nurses who are responsible for thousands of students and multiple schools every day; providing health care. Yet, you would not know this because there is no infrastructure in place to capture this information or account for the investment. *We are after all stewards of the public good are we not?*

Today, we have students with complex health needs who are not receiving a *Free and Appropriate Public Education* because there are not enough qualified nurses to take care of these students during the school day. There is a separation between the medical home being in a health system and the medical home being an extension into the school and community. The complexity of care does not change; the responsibility for the student becomes the districts.

Oregon needs more school nurses and SBHCs that are funded with health dollars for the delivery of healthcare in schools. Oregon needs to have an infrastructure in place to support both school nursing and SBHCs. Oregon schools and families deserve a coordinated school health model at the state level to demonstrate a genuine commitment to the whole child, the whole school, and the whole community..

A School Nurse Consultant position at the Oregon Health Authority within the School and Adolescent Health Program and at ODE makes sense. The Oregon Health Authority School-Based Health Center Program, appropriately described school nurses and School-Based Health Centers as partners in providing comprehensive health services at school and work together to build a health safety net for Oregon students; yet one has leadership and infrastructure and the other does not. We all agree and the evidence supports that Healthy Kids Learn Better.

Your support of SB 698 will begin to balance the resources, gather comprehensive data, create an integrated infrastructure for the delivery of school health services, and provide expertise that will inform the most effective strategy for the provision of comprehensive health services that meet the needs of all students including the most medically complex.

Respectfully submitted,



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