

To: Ways and Means Education Sub-Committee Members

From: Kayla Rask, School Site Coordinator, Northwest Family Services

Date: March 10th, 2015

Re: House Bill 5016

Co-Chairs Rep. Komp and Sen. Monroe and members of the committee, my name is Kayla Rask. I work as a School Site Coordinator under the PreventNet program, serving two Clackamas County middle schools that are funded by Youth Development funds. My job is to support youth and their families, helping them live, grow, and succeed. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 5016 and to share with you the good work that we are doing in Oregon schools and communities.

I come here today because I feel as though we have a shared vision and commitment when it comes to Oregon's youth. My vision and commitment is supporting positive youth development, improving student outcomes such as academic success and school engagement, supporting families, and building strong communities where all youth feel like they belong.

Today, I would like to share with you the story of "Alex", whose name I have changed for this testimony. I met Alex at the beginning of last year's school year—he was just starting 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I got to know Alex quickly, as he would frequent my office during passing times and lunch. We initially connected by sharing unique interests in sports, particularly for the Portland Trail Blazers. Alex was bright, funny, engaging, and kind, but he struggled in many areas. His attendance was low and his grades were failing. I quickly learned about the hardships that he and his family had experienced over the past few years—moving from place to place, losing family members, and being abandoned by his father. I was the first adult in the school to hear Alex's story.

Throughout the school year, I connected with Alex's family, providing them resources and connecting Alex to counseling and after-school activities. I advocated for services within the school that would help engage Alex and improve his grades. As we approached the end of the school year, Alex's main goal was to attend his 8<sup>th</sup> grade recognition ceremony. In order for him to attend, he had to have passing grades. I worked with him to identify key people to help him reach his goal and focused on highlighting his many strengths and resiliencies that encouraged him to believe in himself. On the last day of school Alex walked straight into my office with tears in his eyes, and the biggest smile on his face. He spoke just 3 words, "I did it". I was simply lucky enough to share that success with him, which makes me proud of the work that I am doing.

I understand that this is just one story and that I am not the only caring adult that helped Alex accomplish his goals. However, it's important to understand that as much as I played a role in helping Alex, all of you, co-chairs and committee, played an important role as well. Your support of House Bill 5016 and more specifically for youth development programs, helps us support more young people like Alex and the youth with me today.

Thank you for your time.

Kayla Rask, CPS

PreventNet Site Coordinator

krask@nwfs.org

March 10, 2015

Co-chairs, Representative Komp, Senator Monroe and members of the Committee, my name is Areynna Fernandez. I am currently an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Kraxberger Middle School in Gladstone and I am writing you to testify in support of Youth Development Programs like PreventNet.

Kayla runs the PreventNet program at my school and has been a great person to go to when I am struggling or just need someone to talk to. She has also created an afterschool program called KAOS that has helped me become more social, make new friends, and participate in meaningful activities that helps get my mind off things. I met Kayla in the beginning of the school year when I had a lot of stuff going on at the time. I had been feeling anxious that day and it was the first time my counselor was not available. My math teacher suggested that I could go talk with Kayla, so I did.

Kayla has helped me a lot. She helped me join KAOS which helped with the stress. Since I've become more involved in school activities, I feel more connected to my school in a positive way. This program has helped open up opportunities that I didn't know could exist. I hope that you will continue to support and fund programs like PreventNet so people next year can find adults like Kayla. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Areynna Fernandez

March 10, 2015

Co-chairs Monroe and Komp; and Members of the Joint Committee:

My name is Ali and I am an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Kraxberger Middle School in Gladstone. I am writing you to show my support of Youth Development programs and share with you how they have made an impact on my life.

I have personally benefitted from a Youth Development Program called PreventNet. Here are a few examples:

- I have learned skills in how to engage in healthy conversations with my peers.
- I have gained knowledge in what positive and negative relationships look like.
- I have had the opportunity to get involved in afterschool activities, which has helped me make new friends and connect with positive adults.

Kayla helped get me into some of these programs that taught me useful skills. Before this, I struggled to talk to anyone other than my family and a couple of friends. I am glad that this program has helped me with my school and social skills. This program has also helped me to start thinking about my future but helping me set goals and prepare for college. I am only a middle schooler, but they are happy to get students involved and eager to get started on their future.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,

Ali B.

March 10, 2015

Co-chairs Monroe and Komp; and Members of the Joint Committee:

My name is Kennedy and I am currently a student at Kraxberger Middle School in Gladstone, Oregon. I am writing to share with you my support of Youth Development Programs. I would like to tell you about how one program has made an impact on me.

I have known Kayla for 2 years now and I have been participating in the PreventNet program for over one year. The PreventNet program has given me the opportunity to get involved in positive activities such as afterschool programs. It has also helped me connect with positive role models. These programs have helped me become more social and outgoing.

I hope that you will continue to fund Youth Development Programs such as PreventNet. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,

Kennedy