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February 4, 2016

In RE: HB 4031 "The Coordinated Student Success Act"

Honorable Margaret Doherty and House Education Committee:

I am excited about HB 4031, known as "The Coordinated Student Success Act," a bill that would pilot trauma-informed strategies focusing on a reduction of chronic absenteeism.

Here's why I am excited:

I work as a high school attendance secretary in a rural school in Central Oregon, La Pine to be exact. Through experience and my own education, I have come to know that chronic absenteeism is not the problem – it is a symptom of other problems, problems that most often originate outside of school. With the knowledge of the students and families with whom I have most contact, I can say that these families are most often struggling with poverty, lack of resources, disability, and stress related illnesses. They are not just not sending their children to school. They are often disenfranchised from the system of education and other government systems. They are experiencing generational trauma, passing along the parenting learned within their own childhood trauma to their children. These families are difficult to engage, but it could be easier, if they could come to see schools as places that are building bridges for their children – that schools are places that care about their children and want to partner with them to help their children realize their strengths, and to help them develop resilience to desire well-being.

Schools are specially situated to be able to intervene in the affects of childhood trauma. Any school staff member that interacts with trauma-affected youth should be trained to recognize trauma's effects. Policies and procedures should be visited and revised to reflect the understanding that punitive discipline only serves to re-traumatize youth, pushing them away from the place where they can develop healthy relationships with caring adults. Schools should be places that teach students social emotional skills, places where all students are valued and helped to realize their value, and come to desire their well-being through restoration of hope and engagement.

I could paint the stories of many of the young people with whom I interact – children that have experienced every kind of abuse imaginable – being sexually abused by a neighbor or step-parent, children tossed between biological parent and adoptive parent and back again, children that self-diagnose because they want a label to tell them why they can't learn within the traditional system, children that develop relationships with chemicals because their relationships with humans prove that humans cannot be trusted. There are so many stories – stories that you should hear so that you would know how

important this bill is for the well-being of each individual, each family, each school, each community, and our society.

Some states have already started addressing this issue: Colorado, California, Washington, Massachusetts, New York, etc. It is time for Oregon to get serious about helping all children achieve success in school by addressing the reasons that they are chronically absent, instead of punishing them and their families for situations outside of their control.

With heartfelt passion, I advocate for Oregon's youth and for your support of HB 4031.

Sincerely,

Tonya Karłowicz

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