



February 4, 2016

Members of the Oregon Legislature,

We are writing to express Oregon Primary Care Association's (OPCA) support for HB 4031, the Student Success Act. The bill establishes a pilot program to address the growing problem of chronic absenteeism in our school system. This problem has serious negative impacts for these students in terms of long-term health, success in education and success in the workforce.

OPCA is a nonprofit membership association of all 33 of Oregon's community health centers, also known as federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), and those who support them. Oregon's community health centers operate more than 200 clinics statewide, and are the medical sponsors for more than two dozen school health centers throughout the state, in rural and urban areas.

This bill incorporates best practices and research that indicate that including teachers and school personnel in trauma-informed approaches to absenteeism increases the effectiveness of these programs, and recognizes that the solution to chronic absenteeism will require community based collaboration between schools, health centers, CCOs, non-profits and others. Establishing a pilot program now will help Oregon take advantage of a new federal program, which will provide grants to states and school districts that have a program like this in place.

HB 4031 makes the most of local knowledge and innovation to address a critical problem facing Oregon's young people. Taking action to establish this pilot program will help this next generation be more successful in school, work and in staying healthy.

We respectfully urge your support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Laura Etherton
OPCA State and Federal Policy Director