

Testimony in Support of HB 2658

Social workers have extensive training in the following areas that are powerfully impactful in reducing absenteeism and improving students' school success.

Trauma-informed practices

- Social workers look at the “why” behind a child’s behavior (whole child perspective)
- Understand system barriers in and out of school that increase trauma response
- Trained in responding to all of the traumas listed in the Adverse Childhood Experiences Studies (i.e., homelessness, addiction, abuse, violence, neglect) that have been shown to increase suspension and double the chances of school failure
- Know how to train and support educational staff in trauma-informed responses

Cultural sensitivity and competency

- Understand the impact of historical trauma
- Have extensive training on anti-oppressive practices
- Understand and know how to prevent the School-to-Prison Pipeline
- Have awareness of the disproportionate rates of absenteeism of students of color, refugees and immigrants

Positive and inclusive school climate and culture

- Promote effective school policies and administrative procedures conducive to student learning and teaching excellence
- Enhance professional capacity of school personnel
- Facilitate engagement between student, family, school, and community

Systems perspective

- Recognize that a child is influenced by the systems in which they live and connect (church, school, home, community, etc.)
- Trained on how to engage and partner with families and community resources such as food banks, health care, shelter resources, and homelessness prevention

Mental health

- Provide evidence-based behavior and mental health services, including assessments and interventions of multiple mental health issues: PTSD, depression, anxiety disorders, autism, behavior disorders, etc.
- Suicide prevention

Oregon schools need social workers. Here is what would help:

- Increase student access to school social workers. *HB 2658 creates a pilot program to this effect.*
- Support workforce development by funding programs that utilize school social workers to address issues like absenteeism, graduation rates, and mental health.
- Allow administrators to hire school social workers to social-emotional service positions as part of multidisciplinary teams that also include school psychologists, school counselors, and school nurses. Each possesses special expertise critical to student success.