

Hello Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee,

For the Record, my name is Representative Carla Piluso. I represent House District 50, the Great City of Gresham. I am here in my capacity as the Chair of the Gresham Barlow School Board to testify on HB 2658, which creates pathways to get social workers into our schools.

Gresham, which includes the Rockwood Neighborhood, is a community of great need and opportunity. This is an area where nearly 40% of the population receives snap/food benefits and over one third of the population lives in poverty. Over 40% of households have a child under 18, and the median age is 27. Over 60 languages are spoken in the home here.

Rockwood families struggle with every aspect of poverty that you can imagine. More often than not, students take that stress with them to school. I saw this both in my capacity as the Gresham Police Chief, and as Chair of the Gresham-Barlow School Board.

Despite these challenges, I have found that students in the Gresham Barlow School District want to move forward. We need to empower them, and putting social workers in schools is one strong way to do just that.

In Gresham and communities across the state, social workers can have a huge impact. Social workers are trained mental health professionals. They offer behavioral and mental health support. They can assist and collaborate with our teachers, and provide our students with counseling and therapy. Social workers can positively impact mental health, drug use, chronic absenteeism, bullying, and graduation rates.

Our students won't give up, and we can't give up on them. School social workers benefit our students and enhance the investments we are already making in our schools. As a pilot program, this bill will be a good first step to improving educational outcomes and the lives of our children and families. I urge your support of HB 2658. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Representative Carla C. Piluso