



March 24, 2017

Representative Mitch Greenlick, Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Health Care  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Greenlick and Representatives,

Children First for Oregon is the primary source for data on the wellbeing of Oregon's 860,000 kids. Our program, United for Kids, works with partners like Oregon School-Based Health Alliance, to make Oregon the best place to be a kid. We collaborate with stakeholders from across the state to advance policies and programs that protect and promote the economic security, education, health and safety of all children in Oregon.

Health is at the foundation of children's ability to reach their full potential. Healthy kids are happy kids. Healthy kids are equipped to learn. Healthy kids are empowered to become healthy, thriving adults. In short, when we invest in health, we build a brighter future.

Oregonians have long prioritized the health of their youngest residents. The legislature can reaffirm that reputation by supporting the expansion of School-Based Health Centers. These centers fill the gaps that riddle our health care system. Too few students receive mental health care. Too few students can affordably access preventative care that ensures better health and lower costs. Too few students have a stable health foundation. Students from low-income families are particularly disadvantaged by inadequate coverage. School-based solutions can reinforce the foundations of all students from all communities.

In the thousands of hours children spend in schools over their life, centers can provide critical services that keep students healthier throughout the year. Expanding access to health care in school decreases absences and increases attention and retention.<sup>1</sup>

Health disparities are found in every community in our state. Fortunately, schools are the center of many of these communities. Expanding School-Based Health Centers will close health gaps. Our students will benefit from the care they receive today. Our families, our communities, and our state will benefit as well.

We ask you to support HB 2408 and lay a strong foundation for all of Oregon's children. Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregon's kids.

Kevin Frazier

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<sup>1</sup> "Investment in School Health Capacity," Oregon Health Authority, 2013, available at: [https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/Youth/HealthSchool/HKLB/Documents/Report\\_SHC.pdf](https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/Youth/HealthSchool/HKLB/Documents/Report_SHC.pdf)