



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 111

March 28, 2017

Senate Education Committee

Catie Theisen

Oregon Nurses Association

Chair Roblan and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association in support of Senate Bill 111 which would help Oregon children gain access to nurses at school.

The Oregon Nurses Association is Oregon's oldest and largest nursing union and professional association, and is proud to represent nearly 15,000 registered nurses, advanced practice nurses and nursing students in Oregon. Oregon nurses make up the largest segment of Oregon's health care work force, and work in nearly every health care setting, from large hospitals to small local clinics, from corrections to school-based health centers and in community-based public health.

In 2009, the Oregon legislature passed HB 2693 which recommended a ratio of 1 school nurse for every 750 students. However, in the 2014-15 school year, Oregon had just one registered nurse or certified school nurse for every 2,178 students.¹ Further, 29,734 Oregon students have absolutely no access to a school nurse.²

School nurses play an important role in providing a complete and healthy education for our children. Healthy kids simply learn better. When kids are home sick from school with an asthma attack or in constant pain from dental decay, they aren't getting the full benefits of classroom instruction. Further, research has shown that every dollar invested in a school nurse has a gain of \$2.20.³

Currently, there are ways that school districts can leverage existing resources to better provide care to students. According to the Oregon Health Authority, 58% of Oregon children are enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program through the Oregon Health Plan. However, currently only about 60 school districts or education service districts participate in Medicaid Administrative Claiming or direct-care billing. Senate Bill 111 would help provide technical assistance for billing and implement pilot projects around the state to increase school districts' ability to bill the Oregon Health Plan for services performed, thus utilizing federal Medicaid dollars to help pay for health services performed at school.

Investing in school nurses has robust positive health and economic impacts on the state and yet the school nursing services we provide pale in comparison to most states – some of which have a school nurse in every school building. It's vital that we leverage all existing resources available to help provide the health care Oregon students need and begin to look for pathways to make this a reality for all schools in Oregon. Investing in school nurses ultimately saves money for the state in the long-run and makes a lasting impact on the health and wellness of Oregon's students, which is why ONA urges your support of SB 111 with the -2 amendments.

¹ Unhealthy Schools: The Alarming Decline of School Nurses in Oregon http://www.osea.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/unhealthy_schools_report-2.pdf

² Oregon Health Authority, Task Force on School Nursing Report 2016
https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/Youth/HealthSchool/Documents/TFSN/TFSN_Report.pdf

³ Oregon Health Authority, Task Force on School Nursing Report 2016