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MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 3, 2017
TO: House Committee on Education
FROM: Ava Bartley, FACT Oregon
RE: HB 2223

Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Hernandez and Wilson, and Members of the House Committee on Education:

My name is Ava Bartley, and I am the Advocacy and Engagement Director for FACT Oregon. I am writing to provide testimony in support of **HB 2223**, which directs the Department of Education to establish a program to develop and maintain statewide school nursing services.

FACT Oregon's mission is to empower Oregon families experiencing disability in pursuit of whole lives in their community. We do this with focused work in three interconnected areas: expanding awareness, growing community, and equipping families. The outcome is families with high expectations for their child and a vision for the future where all communities are accessible, welcoming, and embrace that disability is natural.

Since 2012, FACT Oregon has been Oregon's parent training and information center through a grant from the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. Through services created "by families for families," we have helped thousands of families each year navigate barriers, create a culture of inclusion, and demonstrate that a whole life is possible. We do this through in-person trainings, educational conferences, webinars, and support through our statewide helpline via phone and email.

Through our work supporting families whose children experience disability, we have had interactions with a large number of Oregon families who have expressed fear, frustration and concern over the lack of available school nursing services to support children with complex medical needs in the school environment. We are hearing

Empower Oregon families experiencing disability in their pursuit of a whole life by expanding awareness, growing community, and equipping families.

that nurses are stretched thin, and are often relying on delegation to school staff to complete many complex medical tasks that would typically be done by a nurse, such as urinary catheterization, tube feeding and seizure management. Students with complex medical needs who are unable to access nursing services often end up on a shortened school day or on homebound instruction, not as a result of thoughtful consideration of appropriate placement but instead simply because nursing or nursing delegation is not available, which denies those children their right to a free appropriate public education.

A recent "Task Force on School Nursing Report" from September 2016, produced data that substantiates the concerns we're hearing from families.

"Data from 2015 show 95 out of 197 school districts in Oregon have no school nurse available. Based on these districts' student populations, an estimated 29,734 students have no access to a school nurse. Only 50 out of 197 school districts reported meeting the 2016 phase-in ratio of one school nurse for every 2,500 students." Task Force Report, p. 13.

We are becoming increasingly concerned that the shortage of nursing support in schools is affecting the ability of school districts to provide a free and appropriate public education to all students, but in particular, to students who experience significant health challenges. Solutions to this critical problem are needed now.

We urge you to support HB 2223 because it will provide school districts with the resources they need to fund additional school nurse positions to meet the ratios set forth in Oregon statute, which will enable them to ensure all children are safe, healthy and supported in accessing a free and appropriate public education in the school environment.

Thank you for your service to our state and for your support of Oregon children experiencing disability.

Ava Bartley
Advocacy and Engagement Director
FACT Oregon