

HB 2223 relating to school nurses HED, April 3, 2017, 3 PM, Room F

Madam Chair, vice chairs, and Honorable Committee members,

Thank you for hearing HB 2223.

For the record, I am Gene Whisnant, State Rep. HD 53

It is a pleasure to be back in front of this committee.

I bring you a very important bill on which I and others including Speaker Kotek have worked on for years.

I believe that students cannot learn when they enter the school house if they are hungry or if they are not healthy.

This bill addresses their health.

The national goal for the number of school nurses is 1 for 750 students.

Oregon has one nurse for over 4,000 students.

Oregon has OSEA employees providing nursing services.

Several years ago, Rep. Kotek and myself and others tried to address this situation. We were only able to get a Task Force to study the situation. The task force determined we need more school nurses.

Now, let's be honest and report that some schools have school nurses and some schools do not.

I submit we do not have to debate how many we need or if the ratio goal is acceptable or not. Let's just agree we need more school nurses.

Thus, in 2015, we passed another bill to study again and address again the shortage of nurses.

I served on this Task Force with many qualified and experts on this subject. Senator Monnes Anderson and I were the only legislators. I

drove over the mountains to just about every meeting in Salem or Portland.

The committee received valuable information and produced a report with three main recommendations.

1. Award Grants to school districts to assist school districts in complying with the school nursing service requirements specified in ORS 336.201.
2. The Department of Education shall provide technical assistance to school districts and educational service districts to include creating and implementing a sustainability plan for providing school nursing services and other actions.
3. The Department of Education must provide technical assistance to assist school districts and educational service districts to maximize Medicaid billing.

I like # 3!!!

#1 awards school districts that did not prioritize school nursing services and penalizes school districts that have prioritized school nursing services. These grants would come out of the PK-12 State School Fund before the formula is used to allocate school funding.

2 continues to study the issue. We have studied the issue.

3 to maximize Medicaid billing. #1 is used by some school districts and does produce additional funding.

So, the Task Force agreed that Senator Monnes Anderson would submit SB 111 with all three recommendations and Rep. Whisnant would submit HB 2223 with recommendation # 3 only.

On February 7th, a partial group of the Task Force met and we agreed to amend SB 111 with HB 2223 and recommendation # 3 only.

After complaints by OSBA, the Senator agreed to amend SB 111 with pilot project to demonstrate how the Medicaid could be work.

I do not believe we need to created pilot project to require all school districts to submit Medicaid reimbursements.

In fact, I believe that the HB 2223 fiscal impact with be less that the fiscal impact of SB 111 amended and produce more school nursing services sooner. ODE reported in January 2017 that:

It is imperative that Oregon school districts access existing federal health dollars to provide care for students with complex or life-threatening chronic health conditions. Leveraging existing federal Medicaid funding is essential and critical to the provision of school nursing services in Oregon. The Oregon Department of Education has estimated that this will increase the annual Federal Medicaid reimbursement to districts from the current \$5.2 million (SFY 2015-2016) up to approximately \$45 million annually for all current allowable Medicaid billing within 3 years. Let me repeat; ODE believe that if we implement this bill we could increase the Medicaid reimbursement to Oregon from \$5.2 million to \$45 million. Why would we not do this?

Thus, I request this committee pass HB 2223 and refer it to Ways and Means which can compare the financial of each bill and evaluate the outcomes.

Madam chair and honorable committee members; I anticipate I have the support of OSEA.

I believe they share my concerns. That we have not and will not have a serious medical emergency due to a mistake by someone providing nursing services to a student who is not trained or qualified to administer the nursing service.

Remember I began this testimony that our student cannot learn in the school house if the students have health issues.

Please pass this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Whisnant