



School of Occupational Therapy

April 2, 2017

The Honorable Margaret Doherty
900 Court St. NE, H-282
Salem, OR, 97301

RE: HB3263

Dear Representative Doherty, Chair and Members of the House Committee on Education:

The faculty and staff of the School of Occupational Therapy (OT) at Pacific University respectfully requests your support for HB3263 that *directs the State Board of Education to adopt by rule standards for provision of occupational therapy to students who have individualized education programs.*

School-based Occupational therapists (OTs) are clinicians who address sensorimotor, psychosocial and cognitive skills that support children to be successful in their educational programs and role of student.

Caseloads for school-based therapists nationwide have been steadily rising throughout the 1990's to the present day. There are currently no state guidelines for school-based OT caseloads in Oregon. Results of a 2014 survey of 143 occupational therapists that work in Oregon school systems, conducted through a joint effort among the *Occupational Therapy Association of Oregon* and community practitioners indicate:

- Oregon school-based caseloads range from 40 to 120 students per therapist.
- 33% therapists have caseloads of greater than 50 students resulting in less than 40-minutes per week per child at 80% productivity standard (a benchmark for highly productive therapists in the healthcare industry).
- 37% of therapists statewide are not able to meet every student's service time per federal law (IDEA) that requires adequate OT as a 'related service' for students on an *individual educational plan* (IEP) - due to lack of caseload regulation.
- 74% of therapists work after their "paid" hours. Of these therapists:
 - 62% 1-2 hours over an 8 hour day
 - 25% 2-3 hours over an 8 hour day
 - 8% 3-4 hours over an 8 hour day
 - 1% 5-6 hours over an 8 hour day
 - 4% 6+ hours over an 8 hour day
- 37% of therapists rarely or never take a lunch break
- The primary job stressor reported by therapists working in school systems in Oregon is the inability to work with children, including insufficient exposure and frequency of occupational therapy interventions to make progress towards student



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outcomes. This results in high levels of burnout and turnover rates, and inefficient service delivery.

Further, the faculty of the School of OT at Pacific University has witnessed a growing number of our graduates that begin a promising career in the school systems, and then leave the system within a few years because they are unable to provide sufficient exposure and frequency to highly effective occupational therapy interventions to make progress towards outcomes for those whom they are responsible.

Many states have implemented a workload model in lieu of a caseload model because generally a caseload model underrepresents the amount of work that is required to effectively provide assessment, consultation, and/or treatment for students. States that use a workload model average 35 students per therapist, and range from 30-45 depending on the disability levels and ages of the children being served. Other solutions include adopting caseload caps as is done in the state of Washington and increasing use of cost-efficient occupational therapy assistants.

We urge you to actively support HB3263 and move this bill through the legislative process. Supporting HB 3263 leads to better management of OT service in schools, which improves student outcomes and ensures adherence to federal law (IDEA).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tiffany Boggis".

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CC: Members of the House Committee on Education
Representative Diego Hernandez, Vice-Chair
Representative Carl Wilson, Vice-Chair
Representative Paul Evans
Representative Brian Clem
Representative Susan McLain
Representative Julie Parrish
Representative Janeen Sollman
Representative Sherrie Sprenger
Representative Richard Vial