

Submitted

HB 2223 Testimony-Margo Lalich RN MPH, Director MESD School Health Services
April 3, 2017

- Good afternoon, Chair Dougherty and members of the committee. My name is Margo Lalich, Director of School Health Services for Multnomah ESD and Vice-Chair of the 2016 Task Force on School Nursing.
- The Task Force on School Nursing submitted three recommendations in the final report.
- There was consensus within the Task Force that:
 - There is a **critical** shortage of school nurses
 - There have been multiple task forces over the decades and multiple reports all reaching the same conclusion with one exception, **the situation is getting worse and it is now a crisis that is not going to go away**
 - We don't need more reports, Oregon school districts need more school nurses
- MESD School Health Services provides nursing services to a population of more than 100,000 students ages 3-21 everyday in Multnomah and parts of Clackamas County. In 2015-16 there were:
 - 57,000 health room visits. 2016-17 32,000 YTD
 - 5,300 delegations and teachings for students with chronic health conditions. 2016-17 7,500 YTD
 - 12,000 case management related interventions. 2016-17 7,700 YTD
 - 82% of students seen by the nurse or assistant were returned to class. 2016-17 85% returned to class.
 - Nurse to student-school ratio is as high as 1:3500 students with six schools between two counties
 - This does not include the program nurses or the data related to nursing dependent and medically complex students
 - Only 2 of the 8 component districts we serve meet the mandated ratios
- Throughout the school year I receive documented communication from our nurses:
 - **Staffing levels are barely adequate to meet the needs of the complex students we serve**
 - **Too many "near misses" trying to juggle too many things and situations. Harder and harder to keep the balls in the air**
 - Something has got to give
 - **We are in a CRISIS, many of us have reached our tipping point**

- **Unable to manage 3000 students, 6 schools**
 - No health room
 - No dedicated School Health Assistant. Secretaries triage all illness and injuries, in addition to managing SAR and all students with IDD
 - **Many concerns about my nursing practice and licensure**
 - **I have 3,600 students, 22 have IDD**
 - **So many new and unrealistic demands, this is my WAKE UP CALL**
 - **We must work for a safer school practice...**
- From a district employee:
 - The number of students in our building with medical conditions that require regular attention or knowledge of their life threatening conditions and how to treat them in the event of an emergency is substantial and I am no longer comfortable being responsible for their well-being.....
 - How is it that we can agree on what are standard expectations for staffing ratios in a hospital setting where you or your family member may be receiving care, but a similar expectation for our children during the school day is up for political debate.
 - Many of the students we serve everyday that present as “healthy” have significant and life-threatening health conditions that receive the highest standard of care within the health system.
 - We now have a health system in the education system and the majority of care is being provided by school nurses, but the dots are not being connected in conversations about health transformation or the Triple AIM
 - There are parallel’s to the conversation about DHS workers and child safety. We do our best, reluctantly accepting that the system is what it is while hoping that something bad doesn’t happen or a mistake is made despite good intention and good practice.
 - Last week, in another chamber the person sitting next to me commented, “a student hasn’t died yet, have they?”
 - Yet, as I participate in conversations, present more and more data, and observe the recommendations being lost in the political debate, I ask myself and all you, where are fingers going to point when a child is harmed because something wasn’t done when we had a chance.
 - I’m running out of poms poms and pep talks for my own amazing and dedicated team of nurses and health assistants.

Today, I am asking for your support for HB 2223 and your commitment to increase the number of school nurses throughout Oregon to assure the health and most importantly the safety of our students.