

# Health Department

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April 12, 2017

House Committee on Transportation Policy  
900 Court St. NE - HR D  
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 3230 - Safe Routes to School

Chair McKeown and members of the committee, I am Jae Douglas, Environmental Health Director for the Multnomah County Health Department. I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 3230, which would ensure that the health benefits of Safe Routes to School programs reach kids across Oregon. There are two key strengths of this bill. First, it supports a program with a strong public health evidence base. Second, it prioritizes Title I schools, ensuring that kids in disadvantaged communities can get safely to and from school. With those two strengths in mind, I'd like to highlight some of the ways that Safe Routes to School benefits the health of students.

**Safe Routes to School programs increase exercise among students.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified Safe Routes to School as one of the best evidence-based interventions with the potential to improve community health within 5 years.<sup>1</sup> National studies show that Safe Routes programs are associated with a doubling in the percentage of students who walk and bike to school.<sup>2</sup> In Multnomah County and statewide, the leading causes of death are chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease<sup>3</sup>, making it vitally important to establish healthy exercise habits at a young age.

**Safe Routes to School protect children from injuries.** The types of projects included in Safe Routes to School have been shown to reduce pedestrian crashes.<sup>4</sup> This bill has the potential to save lives and to spare families from tragedy. In 2015, unintentional injuries such as car crashes were the leading cause of death among young people ages

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). Health Impact in 5 Years. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/policy/hst/hi5/>

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Safe Routes to School, *Shifting Modes: A Comparative Analysis of Safe Routes to School Program Elements and Travel Mode Outcome*, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. 2012. Available from: [Shifting Modes: A Comparative Analysis of Safe Routes to School Program Elements and Travel Mode Outcome](#)

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2015 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December, 2016. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999-2015, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>

<sup>4</sup> Dumbaugh, E., & Frank, L. (2007). Traffic safety and safe routes to schools: synthesizing the empirical evidence. *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, (2009), 89-97.

1-24 in Oregon.<sup>5</sup> Oregon families have lost over 400 young people to traffic crashes since 2010, many of them in Multnomah County.<sup>6</sup>

**Safe Routes to School benefit the broader community.** These programs are a great example of how helping some of the most vulnerable members of our community can help everyone. Safe crossings and sidewalks not only help kids get to school, but also help a wide array of community members from older adults with mobility devices to truck drivers delivering packages. In Multnomah County, about 98% of the population lives within a mile of a school.<sup>7</sup>

It is our job at Multnomah County Health Department to protect and promote the health of our community: We need to assure that individuals, families and communities gain greater control over the factors that influence their health. As Environmental Health Director for Multnomah County Health Department, I am proud to stand with the advocates on this important legislation. It is all of our responsibility to create a healthier Oregon for future generations.

Jae P. Douglas, Ph.D., MSW  
Environmental Health Director  
Multnomah County Health Department

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<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2015 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December, 2016. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999-2015, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>

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<sup>7</sup> Multnomah County Health Department analysis.

