

**Kate Brown**  
Governor



**Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs**  
"Advocating Equality and Diversity"  
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OCHA support of HB 2658  
April 12, 2017, Hearing Room F, 3:00pm  
House Committee on Education  
Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Hernandez and Wilson, and Member  
Representatives Evans, McLain, Parish, Sollman, Sprenger, and Vial

Dear Committee Members,

For the record, my name is Joseph Gallegos, I am a former State Representative House District 30 and a new member of the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA.) OCHA is pleased to support HB 2658 and, as you consider this bill during its work session, wishes to emphasize the importance of passing this legislation. As well as an OCHA Commissioner, I am the owner of Western Research Associates, a social Research and Development Consulting firm. I am also Professor Emeritus at the University of Portland in the Dept. of Social and Behavioral Sciences. I am a social worker, a social work educator, and a long-time member of the National Association of Social Workers. It is with this background that I support of the bill you will work today.

During the year of 2016, as a State Representative, my office conducted research to identify best practice models of school social work intervention and held several focus groups with various stake holders. Besides talking to school social workers and teachers, our office staff met with Community Based Organizations --of which Stand for Children was a part/member of that coalition (i.e. they support the policy...though their problem they have is with the funding--and that can be addressed in the Ways and Means committees.) The bill you have before you is the result of much of that work.

That said, I offer a few points that may aid your decision making:

1. The HECC (Higher Education Coordinating Commission) SB 418 Report that relates to the "transition" from high school to higher education (see links below). The Task Force report and the presentation to the Higher Ed committee in 2016 expressed some concern regarding the role of School Counselors--specifically, there was concern about two things: a. the TF questioned the training of school counselors; and b. the fact that school counselors were often found doing social service work for which they were not trained and/or was not part of their job description. (Social workers are trained in Trauma Informed Care, do family visits, and apply a more holistic approach to their interventions.)

The purpose of this legislation is not to replace or even challenge the jobs or roles of the school counselors. Rather, it recognizes that the enterprise of getting our students to

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graduation is a team endeavor. This bill is intended to enhance and empower the other members of the education team, teachers and school counselors to make the whole educational enterprise more effective and successful.

SB 418 Report, February 2016 <http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd/Pages/reports.aspx>  
And here is the direct url: [http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd/Documents/HECC/Reports-and-Presentations/LegReports/SB418\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd/Documents/HECC/Reports-and-Presentations/LegReports/SB418_FINAL.pdf)

2. A major concern that this bill is intended to in-part rectify is the dismal graduation rate in our state. When one considers that 35% of our students are of color and 25% are Latino, and that our graduation rates are even less for these subgroups, unless we intervene and do so early and with wrap around services, they will not graduate. Failing to graduate, with insufficient education, they will drain tax payer resources as adults. On the other hand, with an early childhood investment as is proposed by this bill, we can anticipate greater school success and an eventual return on investment through higher wage jobs and careers for our young citizens and in turn greater tax returns for the state.
3. What I ask you for is support of the policy. The House Education committee is a policy committee. Your yes vote only affirms the policy reflected in the bill. That policy would support a STUDY of impact of returning school social workers to the state system for the purpose of reducing the risk factors that impede the graduation of students for whom Adverse Child Experiences (ACE) have created significant barriers to school success. As for the fiscal merit and feasibility of the bill, that is for the Education Ways and Means committee to decide and if they support the concept, for the full Ways and Means to determine how much or how little and from where funds might come.
4. Finally, it may help the committee to be clear on the difference between School Social Worker roles and School Counselor roles. School Counselors help students with academic and career counseling. They are not trained for, nor does their job description include social service intervention, family counseling. Social Workers on the other hand are trained in cultural competence, Trauma Informed Care, as well as how to address issues of poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc. They are also trained in policy and networking skills to bring all resources to bare on a student socio-behavioral problems.

Historically, school social workers were the first to go in the three-decade-long disinvestment in our schools. It is time to continue the reinvestment in our young people by providing them with the support needed to succeed. I hope these points are helpful to you in this "process" of decision making. Let me know if you have any questions. This bill represents good policy. I urge you to give this bill a do-pass recommendation.

Most Respectfully,

OCHA Commissioner, Joseph Gallegos ([gallegos@up.edu](mailto:gallegos@up.edu))