



Testimony on House Bill 2830-2

June 13, 2017

Joint Committee on Tax Reform

Amanda Cort, FNP

Co-chairs Barnhart and Hass and members of the committee,

My name is Amanda Cort, I live in Portland, and I am worried about the health of our school-aged children. I'm very concerned that because corporations pay so little in taxes in Oregon, we are going to have to make cuts to school-based health centers that support our most vulnerable students to stay healthy and ready to learn. I'm a nurse practitioner in a school-based health center, and I provide high-quality primary care to some of our community's most vulnerable children. My clinic is in a school and open during school hours to reach children that otherwise would not be able to access care. Whether it's the parent's own illness, or simply having to work 16 hours a day to make ends meet, some kids don't have parents that can take an afternoon off work to take them to the doctor. Shall we punish those kids by taking away their only access to care?

The bill you are considering is a step in the right direction, but I can tell you from the front line that we need to do far more than just maintain the services we already have. We already had to close one of our school-based health centers this year because of the inadequate funding of the status quo. With this clinic closed, who will look out for the little boy in the big family that hasn't gained weight in 3 years? Who will bridge the gap between diagnosing attention deficit disorder and understanding how to get support from the school for a child of refugees who know nothing about our school system? What about the middle schooler who is too anxious to go to school because he has an undiagnosed traumatic brain injury? And what about the kids just like these ones that go to schools with no school-based health center? I'm worried about these kids, and I know you are too.

If you take immediate access to care away from these vulnerable students, suddenly hundreds of kids miss weeks of school because they can't get their vaccinations. Thousands of teens lose access to confidential birth control and mental health care. The most vulnerable kids across the state lose access to expert, specialized care.

Families like these, and many more, deserve far more and I hope the legislature will pass a tax increase that will be able to make a meaningful difference in our state.

We can't keep piecing together budgets like this when the health of our most vulnerable children is at stake. Our students cannot afford for us to be afraid of corporate interests and their empty threats – we need a revenue package that makes significant investments. We need the Legislature to make a strong statement that the health and wellbeing of Oregon's children is more important than the profit margins of large companies, and we need this now.

My clients are counting on you. Thank you for your time.