

February 8, 2017

To: Representative Margaret Doherty, Chair
House Education Committee

From: Kathy E. Biles, PhD

Re: HB 2529 Support

Written Testimony in Support of HB 2529

Chair Doherty and members of the House Education Committee:

Please accept my written testimony today on HB 2529. My name is Kathy Biles. This is my 17th year serving the Oregon school counseling profession either as a school counselor or as a school counselor educator. I am currently the School Counseling Program Coordinator at Oregon State University, Cascades Campus and leading several school counseling professional learning communities in Central Oregon. I am a past-president of the Oregon School Counselor Association, and am actively involved in advocating for and supporting practicing school counselors. I am also a new board member on the High Desert Educational Service District Board (a four-year position).

Currently, I work with school counselors and other educators in five school districts. My school counseling graduate students provide valuable services in schools during their practicum and internship. At least 75% of my school counseling students also take additional course work in the clinical mental health program.

Six years ago, a group of school counselors and I redesigned how the school counseling students completed their practicum experience. One of the main reasons we believed we needed to make some changes, was because often times the school counselor's role is not consistent across schools and districts. In part, this is because administrators' are not aware of school counselors' extensive training and experiences, or their true worth in their building. Several principals allowed us to bring our newly designed practicum experience to their school. This model allows us to take small groups, rather than individual students, into the school. I or another part-time faculty remain in the school with them. The on-site school counselor has scheduled individual students, small groups and classrooms for each student to work with. After several years of improving on and completing this model of practicum, the one principal, who knows what her school counselor does, and my students' do, has stated that she will hire a school counselor over an assistant principal any day.

In addition to being in that elementary school each year, we are also in a middle school. The principal is learning all that his school counselors do, and the incredible resource my practicum students are, as we work with students providing academic, college and career lessons that

support their classroom education. We provide the social emotional learning that many students need as they develop into engaged students.

In many schools across Oregon, the same evaluation scales used for teachers are used to evaluate school counselors. Recently, several school districts have re-written school counselor evaluations, based on school counseling preparation, school counseling standards and current school counseling comprehensive models. Administrators in those districts are now learning how school counselors are capable, yet this is not the norm.

When working with administrators who know how school counselors collaborate and contribute to the overall climate of the school, college and career readiness, and helping students engage in their education, which then improves attendance rates and reduces drop-out rates, it strengthens the learning community for students, parents, faculty and staff. By incorporating additional learning opportunities through course work for an administrator license, principals will be better prepared to utilize their school counselors to their fullest, working as a team to ensure every student has the 21st century skills needed to succeed in our global society.

Respectfully,

Kathy E. Biles, PhD, NCC