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Vote YES for Mental Health Taskforce SB 231

According to a study and report completed by Mental Health America, Oregon ranks 49th in the country in regards to mental health wellness. Mental health issues are a growing concern on college campuses that can impact student recruitment, retention, and program completion. The American Psychological Association reports that in recent years, there have been sharp increases in the number of severe psychological problems being addressed at college counseling centers around the country. Mental health issues contribute to many students doing poorly or not successfully completing college programs.

Too many Oregonians are suffering, and far too many are not receiving the treatment they need to live healthy and productive lives. Seventy five percent of mental illnesses are onset by age 24 and 43.8 million adults in the nation, about one in five, experienced a mental illness in 2012, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Lina deMoraes, a current LBCC student who is type I bipolar shares her story below:

"I struggle with many aspects of life that my neurotypical peers often take for granted. Some nights are spent wide awake, fighting thoughts of self-harm and worthlessness. Some days I can't make it to class because the thought of even leaving my house is terrifying and unbearable. And almost every moment of my life is spent battling crippling anxiety, which is truly exhausting. Those are the kinds of struggles that often prevent neurodivergent students like me from succeeding in higher education. A survey at LBCC found that close to half of the surveyed population (~41%) felt **depression** so severe that it was "**difficult to function**" and ~51% reported experiencing "**overwhelming anxiety**". But perhaps the most concerning statistic was the fact that while almost **11%** of those surveyed reported **seriously considering suicide**, alarmingly, **less than 8%** of **ALL respondents** received mental health services from the college's Counseling or Health Services."

College counselors are seeing a record number of students who are dealing with a variety of mental health problems, from depression and anxiety, to more serious psychiatric disorders. But what is unknown is what services our public higher education institutions offer to students. This is why SB 231 is so important. SB 231 establishes the Task Force on Student Mental Health Support and requires that the task force investigate how mental health issues and substance abuse disorders among students impact college students, including in areas of student recruitment, retention, and program completion. SB 231 requires the task force to submit report to interim committee of the Legislative Assembly relating and to create policy recommendations for the 2019 legislative session. Support students' mental health with a "YES" vote.