

February 6, 2019

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Linthicum and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Emily Sallee, and I have been asked to testify as a representative of OSCA – the Oregon School Counselor Association. I currently serve as Past President on the OSCA board and have previously served as President, President Elect, and Elementary Vice President. As of today, OSCA has 448 members of professional school counselors and counselor educators in Oregon, and our member-base is growing with each year.

I would like to tell you a little more about myself and my interest in this specific bill. I have been a Professional School Counselor for the past ten years, mostly at the elementary level. Additionally, I will be graduating in June with my PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision from Oregon State University. My dissertation topic is the application of Joiners Interpersonal Theory of Suicide to the prevention and intervention of adolescent suicidal ideation and behaviors in schools. This bill is a validation point for my research rationale and practical implications. Our schools are uninformed, unprepared, and ill-equipped to respond to suicidal ideation and behavior of our students, and I'm not only talking about high school students, but rather K-12 students from ages 5 to 18+.

Oregon is one of only three states that do not have suicide prevention regulations for schools in statute and many schools do not have access to national best practices around suicide prevention. What Oregon does have is 1 in 4 students with diagnosable mental health disorders, 75% of which will not receive outside services. That tells me that of the 500 children at my school of work, 125 have a diagnosable mental health disorder, and of those 125, only about 31 will receive the outside services they need.

In addition to being a professional school counselor invested in Oregon students and a doctoral student researching youth suicidal behaviors, I am currently a counselor educator at George Fox University in the Graduate School of Counseling's School Counseling program. I educate and supervise school counselors-in-training to meet the academic, career, and social/emotional needs of all students. Hence, I also have the pleasure of working with some really phenomenal professional school counselors that serve as site supervisors to my students.

In other words, I'm completely invested in Oregon School Counselors and the students they serve. Additionally, I'm invested in the prevention and intervention of what is becoming an epidemic in even our youngest students. The benefit I see in getting schools access to model suicide prevention policy and requiring every school have a policy is systemically far reaching. And please let me clarify that its benefit goes far beyond the school counseling profession, but rather it embodies all adults that work in Oregon schools, all children that access Oregon schools, all families that engage with Oregon schools, and all communities that support Oregon schools.

Adi's Act builds off of Oregon's Safe Schools Act of 2009 that requires anti-bullying policies in K-12 schools. Every student in Oregon should be safe, supported, and affirmed while at school. For these reasons, OSCA calls on the Oregon legislature to pass SB 52 and also find ways to better fund schools to support our youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support for this proposed legislation.

Emily Sallee
OSCA Past President
Professional School Counselor
Counselor Educator