

Health Department

February 6, 2019

House Committee on Education
900 Court St. NE - HR D
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2327 - Relating to safe schools to learn

Chair Doherty, Vice-Chairs Alonso León, Helt, and members of the Committee, my name is Sarah Lochner and I am the Deputy Director of Government Relations for Multnomah County. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on HB 2327.

We are supportive of the intent of this bill as high rates of violence and suicide in schools harm youth and the learning environment. There is clearly a need to provide more safety and we are supportive of a comprehensive, coalition approach to reduce violence, bullying, and suicide.

I have already been in touch with the proponents of the bill and they have been very gracious in working with me. I did want to let the committee know, however, that because Multnomah County is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we believe this bill can and should do better in these areas. As such we are requesting some language changes to address the following:

- We need to ensure protections against the overprofiling of youth of color and other protected classes. There are numerous local and national reports detailing the current and historical impact of disproportionate discipline on students of color. The work of these Assessment teams and additional violence prevention efforts may potentially exacerbate rather than redress these trends if not explicitly protected against with an implicit bias analysis.
- Multnomah County Health Department's violence prevention work focuses on root causes via a public health approach to violence prevention grounded in equity, healing, and resilience. We recommend that the additional scaffolding around threat assessment teams in this bill has a stronger emphasis on school climate and relational approaches, and that there are processes built in to analyze how individual school communities and youth should be sustainably supported.
- We are concerned about who will be involved in assessment teams. There are many documented discrepancies with race by law enforcement and school systems in Oregon and we need to make sure these discrepancies will not exist within this system.

- We are concerned about the support for school districts and education service districts in the establishment of community informed, *trauma informed*, and *culturally competent* suicidal behavior prevention programs that particularly meet the specific needs of Native American, LGBTQ youth, and youth with disabilities who face disproportionately high rates of suicidal behavior.
- We would like the to ensure, that within this bill, are plans for accountability to make sure that equity and practices are being monitored to safeguard against profiling, discrimination or outdated practices.. Additionally we want to make sure we have accountability around:
 - Differing philosophies of violence and suicide prevention
 - Monetary resources
 - Styles of discipline and justice practicesto make sure they align with best practice, culturally specific, restorative, trauma informed violence prevention strategies.

Thank you for considering this legislation and our suggested revisions. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Sarah Lochner
Deputy Director of Government Relations
Multnomah County