

Health Department

February 25, 2019

Senate Committee on Education
900 Court St. NE - HR B
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 584 - Relating to safe schools to learn

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Thomsen, 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 SB 584.

Multnomah County is supportive of the intent of this bill as the rates of violence and suicide in schools are far too high and have ripple effects that go far beyond the learning environment. There is clearly a need to provide more safety and services, and we are supportive of a comprehensive, coalition approach to reduce violence, bullying, and suicide.

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 language changes, or at the very least rule making, to address the following:

- Protections against the overprofiling of youth of color and other protected classes. As you are well aware, 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 but forth in SB 584 and additional violence prevention efforts may potentially exacerbate rather than redress these historical trends.
- These concerns can be addressed by ensuring diversity within the Assessment Teams along with annual implicit bias training for all members of those teams.
- 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 utilizing this best-practice approach, by building up additional scaffolding around threat assessment teams so that they have a stronger emphasis on school climate and relational approaches, with built-in processes to analyze how individual school communities and youth should be sustainably supported. One way to help address this is through meaningful youth involvement in the program design and implementation.

- We want to ensure that this program is creating community informed, *trauma informed*, *and culturally competent* suicidal behavior prevention programs that meet the specific needs of Native American, LGBTQ youth, and youth with disabilities -- who face disproportionately high rates of suicidal behavior.

Lastly, we would to see plans for accountability -- to make sure that there are checks and balances around: differing philosophies of violence and suicide prevention; monetary resources; styles of discipline and justice practices -- to 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