



March 8, 2019

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Education Committee:

On behalf of Basic Rights Oregon, I respectfully request your support for HB 2224 to invest in the social, emotional, and mental health of Oregon's students by providing resources to school districts for wraparound services and staff to help student succeed in school.

Basic Rights Oregon works to ensure that all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Oregonians experience equality with a focus on transgender and racial justice. We're also particularly focused on the needs of LGBTQ youth and that's why we're here today in support of HB 2224, so that all students are given the support they need to thrive.

In 2017, the Oregon Health Authority's Healthy Teens Survey showed a startling reality for LGBTQ students in Oregon. Nearly half of lesbian, gay or bisexual 8th graders have contemplated suicide. Close to a quarter of lesbian, gay or bisexual 8th graders have attempted suicide. Almost a third of transgender 8th graders have attempted suicide.

These numbers are overwhelming because they represent the obvious need for support for LGBTQ students and others who experience trauma. We understand that schools alone cannot address the total scope of the unmet social, emotional and mental health needs of students. But by providing social workers, school counselors, school nurses, schools psychologists, mental health specialists, and other professionals to support students and their families, schools can play a critical role in helping ensure that all students, no matter who they love or how they identify, see a future for themselves in Oregon.

We strongly support this bill, along with other efforts to give schools tools they need to help students thrive. This includes SB 52, Adi's Act, which will provide a model suicide prevention policy for all school districts in Oregon and addresses populations at higher risk for youth suicide, including LGBTQ youth, youth with disabilities, and foster youth.

We are very heartened that the legislature is taking up these issues now because we don't have time to wait. We encourage you to pass HB 2224 and invest in the future of Oregon.

Thank you.

Nancy Haque
Executive Director