



HB 2224: Grants for Improved Mental, Social, Emotional, and Physical Health of Students

Letter of Support | February 25, 2019

To Chair Doherty, Vice-Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chair Helt, and members of the House Committee on Education:

My name is Sabine Tronco and I am a freshman at Glencoe High School in Hillsboro. I am also a member of [Oregon Student Voice \(OSV\)](#), a youth-led nonprofit that empowers students to be authentic partners with K-12 education decision makers. I am writing on behalf of OSV in support of House Bill 2224. This bill directs the Department of Education to distribute grants to improve the mental, social, emotional, and physical health of students, and create a list of curricula and trainings that can be used in schools. In the following, I share my experience and those of my peers regarding mental health challenges at school.

Every single day, I hear from peers who are struggling with mental health. Collectively, we burn ourselves out on homework, extracurricular activities, and career aspirations. Harassment and bullying are common in our schools with one in 5 students reporting being bullied by someone in the past 30 days. Beyond these school-related concerns, many of us also struggle with societal issues and pressures related to our family, friends, and personal health that keep us from being able to concentrate or work effectively inside and outside the classroom.

From my own experiences, finding access to mental health resources outside of school is challenging, especially when I or my peers are experiencing a crisis. I know that I am not alone in this issues as the Oregon Student Voice (2018) *State of Our Schools Report* found that only 58 percent of students agree that there are services for mental health available at their school (21 percent disagree and 22 percent do not know). Additionally, only 52 percent of students agree that they can easily access mental health resources through their school (23 percent disagree and 25 percent do not know). I also have found that teachers often do not know the best place to point students when they are in need of resources, which can be challenging for teachers looking to support students. It is important that the Department of Education provides teachers and students with easy access to these resources so that students can focus on learning.

I, as well as the high school members of Oregon Student Voice, believe that HB 2224 is an important step that will help students across the state live healthier and happier lives. With the funding and resources made available, schools will be better able to care for their students. We hope that the House Committee on Education approves HB 2224.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sabine Tronco

Oregon Student Voice