

To: House Committee on Education
From: Shawn Diez, MA in Counseling
Date: 3/10/19
Re: Opposition to HB 2441-1 (Coordinated Comprehensive School Counseling Program)

Dear House Committee on Education Members,

As an educator in the field of school counseling for the past 18 years, I have seen the landscape of public schools change dramatically. While the rigor and standards for learning continue to increase, so has the multi-faceted and complex needs of our children. I am grateful that I have been in districts who have valued the need to educate the “whole child” and who have worked to maintain essential supports for students with robust school counseling programs. I have also witnessed schools in surrounding areas that have claimed to have a coordinated comprehensive school counseling program on paper but failed to truly see a program fully implemented that effectively addressed the academic, career, personal and social development as well as a sense of community involvement for each student. Almost without fail, these districts were those that at times had much needed supports in the areas of mental health, but lacked licensed school counselors to monitor and administer a program’s implementation. For this reason, I am writing to voice my concerns and to speak out in opposition to House Bill 2441-1.

I come from a clinical background and as a school counselor work closely and collaboratively with mental health workers, licensed social workers, and behavior specialists both in and out of the schools. These partners are critical to meet the ever-increasing mental health challenges and depth of need that our students and families are facing today. In an ideal world, we would have several licensed clinical social workers working in each school building to partner with licensed professional counselors to best meet the high level of need in our young people. However, only licensed school counselors have the education, training, experience and approach to manage a fully comprehensive approach to a school counseling program. This is the recommendation of both the American School Counselor Association as well as the Oregon School Counselor Association to best meet the needs of our students. Licensed school counselors are able to understand the multi-faceted approach to proactively and collaboratively provide preventative guidance lessons, school-wide activities, skill groups, individual supports and collaborative problem solving with all necessary parties. This includes working with teachers, staff, families and outside resources to meet the entire spectrum of academic and social-emotional learning that students need to be successful in school and prepared for success in their future. **This role cannot be filled by just any licensed social worker, administrator or other educator. Their education, training and focus does not prepare them to tackle this extremely vital component in the educational system. For these reasons, I urge that you not support HB 2441-1.**

Sincerely,
Shawn Diez, MA
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