

March 9, 2019

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to urge your support for School Social Workers like myself and the students, families, and communities who benefit from having expanded access to the supports and knowledge school social workers can provide. Two important bills are going to be heard Monday 3/11/19 HB 2441, which clarifies that School Social Workers can implement comprehensive school counseling framework and HB 2940 establishes a pilot program to increase public schools served by school social workers and appropriates 20 million for districts to apply for grants to do this.

School social work services are essential in schools in responding to students and families who are:

- Impacted by trauma
- Facing housing instability and homelessness
- Dealing with the effects of poverty
- Living in homes with domestic violence
- Struggling with mental health issues
- Supporting marginalized and historically underserved communities
- Dealing with the impacts of substance abuse

As a school social worker, I not only help students and families impacted by the things listed above, but I also help staff and communities understand the impacts of these issues and learn how they can address them. I work to help implement systems of change at building, district, and community level to have impact on future generations of students.

School social workers also have the training and education that makes them uniquely qualified to understand and develop systems that support students and families with the biggest barriers to academic achievement and subsequent life success. All school social workers have explicit education around systemic racism and discrimination, which is a central factor in Oregon's persistently low graduation rates for students of color.

My personal experience seeing school social workers make a difference for students includes witnessing how connecting to help provide a food box or a mental health referral can lead to a domino effect in a family and a community. My role allows me to connect with families for a myriad of purposes and school social focuses on the holistic student experience in a way essential to inspiring and empowering each student.

I am urging you to vote **YES** on HB 2441 and HB 2940! These bills will give Oregon's school children the chance to:

- Access mental health services at school
- Connect with resources and agencies that provide support for basic needs, such as housing, food and utilities
- Have assistance in navigating complex systems within schools districts
- Get connected to resources for sexually minority youth and families
- Get connected to culturally specific resources and supports
- Referrals and connections to youth and adult substance abuse providers and services

Thank you for your support,

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