

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to ask for your support for School Social Workers. 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 who are: (pick the ones that are true for your experience or school community)

- 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
- Implementing systems of change
- Dealing with the impacts of substance abuse

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.

This past year, my best friend's son fell into a depression following his parents' divorce. If not for the social worker, I am not sure how he would have fared with both parents working full time and teachers not having the time to give the required individualized attention he needed. His guidance counselor at school was helpful, but also overwhelmed with her current student load. He is in counselling outside of school, but having a social worker to help him manage the school day is critical. This young man is not a special circumstance. We have many like him who need extra guidance with many different issues - anxiety, food insecurity and abuse, just to name a few. It would be a huge mistake to not have this support. I would say it is even more important than what is happening in the classroom.

We are urging you to vote **YES** on HB 2441 and HB 2940! These bills will give Oregon's school children the chance to:(pick the ones that are true from your experience)

- 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 domestic violence services
- 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,

Hilary Conway

Wilson High School Foundation Chair

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