

# Support HB 2940: Increased Number of Social Workers in Schools

Mitzi Bauer <mbau5544@comcast.net>

Mon 3/11/2019 12:15 AM

Paola

To: Rep Doherty <Rep.MargaretDoherty@oregonlegislature.gov>;

Cc: Rep Reschke <Rep.EWernerReschke@oregonlegislature.gov>; Rep Alonso Leon <Rep.TeresaAlonsoLeon@oregonlegislature.gov>; Rep Helt <Rep.CheriHelt@oregonlegislature.gov>; Rep Hernandez <Rep.DiegoHernandez@oregonlegislature.gov>; repjaneensollman@oregonlegislature.gov <repjaneensollman@oregonlegislature.gov>; Rep Wallan <Rep.KimWallan@oregonlegislature.gov>; Rep Neron <Rep.CourtneyNeron@oregonlegislature.gov>; Rep Reardon <Rep.JeffReardon@oregonlegislature.gov>;

Dear Chair Doherty and Members of the Education Committee,

I write in support of HB 2940: to provide a pilot program to increase the number of public school students served by school social workers.

One of the top findings of the Joint Committee on Student Success was to provide such support staff for Oregon children, especially those that are struggling with mental illness, trauma and need social service supports. I have personally witnessed the value of including social workers on the team at Whitcomb Elementary school with our Hispanic moms. The Madres de Crazon have become strong leaders at their school and in our community thru the support of social workers encouraging their presence at the school and being true partners in their child's education. Our district legislators in Salem now recognize their group.

The 2018 State of Mental Health in America ranks Oregon 44<sup>th</sup> compared to other states in low rates of access and high prevalence of mental illness. Oregon has the highest rate of episodes of youth severe major depression. The North Clackamas school district has 41% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch, and there are 70 languages spoken. One of ten middle school students in our district have attempted suicide in the past year, and one in 5 middle school students have experienced bullying in our middle schools. Our students are crying for help.

With the increasing need for an array of services (mental & physical health, clothing, dental services, food, and affordable housing) for our students and their families, we need a team approach. We do not have a social work program in our district and with current large class sizes and 1 counselor to every 440 students, there are not enough adults available to help. We simply cannot meet all of the needs. Social workers are essential part of the learning team:

- Connect families to basic needs
- Connect families to outside resources & agencies
- Collaborate with systems outside of the district
- Provide a personal relationship with families and a voice of support

This cannot be an unfunded mandate. Resources must be included to cover the program to help break down barriers to education for each child.

Sincerely,

Mitzi Bauer, NC school board, Parent Community Leadership Alliance of NC

