

March 11, 2019

Dear House Education Committee,

My name is Shannon Foxley, I'm the school counselor at Hall Elementary School in the Gresham Barlow School district and a proud Licensed Professional School Counselor (PSC). I work in a Title One school and am enjoying my 15th year in this amazing profession. I am a graduate of the PSU School Counseling program and have worked as a school counselor since 2004.

At noon on Sunday, March 10th, I learned about **HB 2441** and have been in furious conversation with my colleagues since I received the information. My plan was to come and testify this afternoon, but unfortunately am not able. Please accept this letter as my personal testimony.

I want to start by saying that I am not opposed to having school social workers in schools, and in fact would enthusiastically support having a social worker in EVERY school. The knowledge, training, and service they provide is invaluable, especially in the current climate of mental health needs and student disruption. With that said, I am opposed to HB 2441 as it is currently written.

Professional School Counselors provide both a service and a knowledge base that is specific to their training. My three-year program at PSU included some of the same training as the cohort that was pursuing traditional counseling degrees and has a specific cohort for future school counselors only. Our cohort focused specifically on the skills that a counselor will need to implement a comprehensive school counseling program. The heart of this bill is changing the language around who may implement a comprehensive school counseling program, to allow school social workers to be allowed to work in the capacity of a professional school counselor. Many people do not understand the difference between a school social worker and a school counselor and think they are the same. They are not. The training is different as is the licensure.

As of today, a school social worker cannot get a TSPC license to work as a school counselor - unless they get something called a child development specialist license, which must be renewed yearly and cannot work above grade 8. The easiest way for me to explain this to other educators is: imagine someone who has a master's in biology. She might have a lot of knowledge about science, but she does not have the training to be a classroom science teacher. This law would in essence allow someone with just a master's degree to start teaching science.

I am urging the House Education Committee to either amend the bill or not pass it as drafted. The issue isn't that we don't want social workers in schools - WE DO - it's that the training programs of social workers and professional school counselors are different and meet the needs of students differently. As I was sharing with a friend, it's not an either/or conversation but a both/and conversation.

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Shannon Foxley  
School Counselor, Hall Elementary School, Gresham-Barlow School District