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Testimony in support of the HB 2940, which establishes a pilot program to increase public schools served by school social workers and HB 2441, which clarifies School Social Workers can implement comprehensive school counseling framework.

Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Alonzo Leon and Helt, Representatives Hernandez, Neron, Reardon, Reschke, Sollman and Wallan:

My name is Julie Prindle and I am the Senior Manager of Social Work Services for Multiple Pathways to Graduation with Portland Public Schools. I also teach and supervise MSW students from Portland State University in the field of school social work and have supervised school counselors in the past. I have been training and supporting the role of school social workers for the past 15 years in Oregon. Through these many years of practice I continue to see a profound need for social worker services in the school setting.

I support school communities who have been greatly impacted by poverty, trauma, substance abuse, lack of resources, students who have been pushed out of school, domestic violence, racial violence, housing and food insecurity, suicide and mental health issues. There is a need for skilled and trained social workers who understand culturally responsive mental health services, who understand how to address systemic issues that are excluding students from schools and alienating families from the school experience. I work daily to support social workers to identify and meet the needs of students who are consistently hungry, families who are unsure how to manage the early onset of psychosis for their adolescent, and to support teachers and staff to understand how their own secondary trauma needs to be supported.

As school social workers we have the training, education and continuing education that makes us uniquely qualified to provide these services in the school setting. Since, the early 1900's, school social workers have been working to build bridges from school to the home and community. We are trailblazers in the field of ecological systemic work which is an asset to schools that are often bogged down by the requirements of day to day education. We have the ethical compass to address systemic racism and discrimination, which interfere in the successful completion of school for our students of color in Oregon.

I have a role, which affords me the privilege of witnessing the positive impact school social workers make on school communities and in the lives of students. They are building partnerships with food banks to provide food, showing up at families homes and connecting with them around barriers to attendance, educating staff about vicarious trauma and how to care for self, building whole school suicide prevention, working daily to get up stream and move schools out of crisis, finding a mattress for students, showing up at emergency rooms, educating schools how to support students who experience profound loss and the list goes on and on. School administrators continually ask me yearly about how they can get a school social worker in their buildings. Here is our chance with BH 2940 and HB 2441. I want all students in Oregon, especially those with great need, to have the benefit and support of school social workers in their buildings. I want a strong collaboration with other counseling disciplines in the school settings so territory does not interfere with students and families getting their needs met.

Thank you for your support.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie Prindle".

Dr. Julie Prindle, LCSW  
Senior Manager of Social Work Services