

Monday, March 11, 2019

Dear Representative Doherty,

I am writing to ask for your support for School Social Workers. Two important bills are going to be heard today, 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:

- Impacted by trauma
- Facing housing instability and homelessness
- Struggling with mental health issues
- Supporting marginalized and historically underserved communities
- Implementing systems of change

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.*

For the past three years have worked for a community organization serving young queer and trans individuals in both a community center setting as well as in their own schools. I have seen the effects empowered social workers can have on creating safer environments for marginalized students. These social workers act as powerful advocates for students, uplifting their voices, and ultimately contribute to changing school policies, practices, and norms that suppress students of color, queer and trans students, students with mental and physical abilities than those our society has come to label as normal. Conversely, I have seen the effects of disenfranchised social workers in schools or a complete lack of a social worker in schools, and sadly it is much of the same. As your constituent, a student pursuing a degree in social work, a professional in the field every day, a believer that policy shifts can in fact uplift historically marginalized populations, and as a member of the LGBTQ community who could've used an uplifting social worker in my school aged years, I implore you to vote **YES** on **HB 2441** and **HB 2940**!

These bills will give Oregon's school children the chance to:

- Get connected to resources for sexually minority youth and families
- Get connected to culturally specific resources and supports
- 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

Thank you for your support,



John S Marvin
Master of Social Work Student