

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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METROPOLITAN LEARNING CENTER

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL

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.

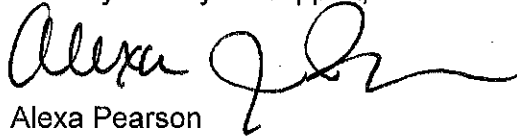
I am the principal of K-12 alternative program, Metropolitan Learning Center, which is part of Portland Public Schools. Many of our students come to us with mental health issues that prevent them from being able to be successful at a large comprehensive school. Unfortunately, we only have one school counselor for our entire program. This year we were able to hire a school social worker with grant funding, and it has made a huge difference for our students and staff. Our social worker leads small groups, provides one-on-one counseling support, visits the homes of our students who are struggling with attending school, and provides training for our staff on trauma-informed practices. She has also helped us to develop our social emotional learning curriculum.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alexa Pearson", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alexa Pearson

Principal

Metropolitan Learning Center