

Here is a letter of support for HB 2876

I am writing in support of HB 2876. I have worked in many public schools in the United States and in other countries. I am currently a teacher and Mentor/ Recruitment and Retention Specialist for Educators of Color in North Clackamas School District. In both of my roles I work with educators and students who come from historically underrepresented and marginalized communities. My experience working with social workers who are implementing counseling programs at the elementary level has been wonderful. I have also worked with licensed school counselors. Though all professionals have expertise working with students helping to address barriers to their academic success and emotional health, I have found that social workers have a more focused training dealing with social injustices and issues related to equity that is so often needed for our most marginalized staff, students, and family members that make up our public schools especially Title 1 schools.

Often at the elementary level there is only one social service position. Especially in Title 1 elementary schools there should be social workers in this position. I understand there has been some issues related to licensed school social workers having the college and career ed training needed to fully implement a comprehensive school counseling program. I can say without hesitation that those issues can be met by other highly qualified teaching staff at the elementary level. AT Title 1 schools the comprehensive counseling program is implemented by many staff at the school as it is often all hands on deck approach as the needs are immense.

The equity, mental health and social work needs cannot be met by other educators and these are critical needs that school social workers are highly qualified for. Social workers have the knowledge to help our community access resources to help with things such as; mental health, housing, food, and abuse. The issues that are showing up in classrooms today are societal. It's not always in a teachers wheelhouse to know how to solve these problems. In most of the elementary schools in which I have worked these needs take priority and are what create the most barriers for learning and success in my students. Having worked in a school where licensed school social workers are the only ones implementing the counseling program I see day in and day out how their expertise supports our students academic and social emotional success. This matters, it is a way in which we can have a direct and positive affect on our historically underrepresented and marginalized groups. Schools need to have the flexibility to hire the most qualified candidate and that may be a licensed school social worker.

As a teacher and a mentor supporting teachers who are from underrepresented and marginalized groups in our public schools, I urge you to support HB 2876. It will increase school social workers that is so needed in our schools today, especially in those schools with the most vulnerable populations.

Sincerely
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