

P.O. Box 12267 Portland, OR 97212 p: 503.775.4931 www.PPAOregon.org

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

February 3, 2020

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee on Education:

A student's ability to flourish and excel in school is deeply impacted by a myriad of factors. Hunger, mental health challenges, bullying, experiences of trauma, and lack of access to health care and sexual health education create additional barriers that can make it difficult for Oregon youth to reach their full potential. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon respectfully requests the committee's support of House Bill 4132 to provide our state with the data we need to make informed decisions. This data can help decision makers when evaluating and investing in programs, initiatives, and curricula that facilitate learning and promote health, prevent injury, and reduce high risk behaviors among youth.

The Oregon Student Health Survey is the only source of statewide data on school climate and the health and wellbeing of Oregon students. Yet funding for the survey is unstable and the Oregon Health Authority is not sufficiently staffed to support schools in interpreting and utilizing their data. To work towards equity in health and education, we need to understand the challenges facing our youth and be responsive to their needs. The 2017 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey uncovered alarming data about school climate and sexual harassment and assault: 7% of Oregon 8th-graders and 6% of Oregon 11th-graders reported experiencing unwanted sexual comments or attention in the 30 days prior to the administration of the survey while about 18% of Oregon 11th-graders reported having experienced sexual coercion at some point in their lives. The survey also found that nearly half of lesbian, gay or bisexual 8th-graders have contemplated suicide. These data show how incredibly important it is to ensure that Oregon's health education standards are fully implemented, which includes each school district having a plan of instruction that, among many aspects of the curriculum, is LGBTQ+ inclusive and includes information about sexual and reproductive health; consent; healthy relationships; child abuse prevention; bullying and school safety.

We need accurate data to create metrics; support accountability and transparency; and drive effective decisionmaking. This is especially relevant as agencies and school districts work to implement the Student Success Act and its initiatives on student health and safety; mental and behavioral health supports; and equity. Codifying and adequately resourcing the Oregon Student Health survey will allow OHA to more robustly support schools and districts that participate in understanding what their data "say," so they can implement programs and curricula that are responsive to their students' needs. HB 4132 will facilitate interagency collaboration to help address health within education. It also requires youth input during the survey development to ensure that the survey covers the most pressing issues identified by students.

Determining the next steps in implementing Oregon's sex education law is a good example of why we need accurate data on student health and safety. Studies show that comprehensive sex education programs not only improve health outcomes, they additionally help prevent child abuse, sexual violence, and gender-based discrimination. Comprehensive sex education and healthy relationship training improves socio-emotional well-being by teaching skills related to building safe and positive relationships, understanding and accepting difference, challenging bias, resolving conflict, making healthy decisions, and defining and promoting enthusiastic consent practices that empower youth and help keep them healthy and safe.¹ That is why a majority of Americans, the American Medical Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics support comprehensive sex education.

 $[\]label{eq:linear_solution} $1 https://siecus.org/sex-ed-is-a-vehicle-for-social-change/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=cc47263d-030b-4433-bd66-fd1e3fd26f45 $$$



Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

While Oregon is a leader in its sexual health education laws and standards, our statutes include no repercussions for noncompliance, and there is no budget or funding allocated for supporting districts in implementation, or monitoring implementation, except for the .5 FTE that the Department of Education allocates to issues related to sex education in Oregon. The Oregon Health Authority surveyed school districts regarding their sex education policies and curricula. Only 35 school districts out of 197 reported having the required plan of instruction.² Across all the districts that replied to the survey, the top barrier to being in compliance with the law was a lack of adequate funding. The other top two barriers that districts identified were lack of curriculum guidance and lack of training.³ All three barriers are related to a lack of adequate funding and resources that we must begin to address if we are going to ensure that our students can go to school free of harassment and bullying.

This is just one of countless examples of where more information about the health and safety of Oregon students would support data-informed decision-making about next steps on something that has a significant impact on student health and wellness. Allowing students to answer questions about the various health and safety issues that impact them provides unique data where students can directly impact priorities and investments in our schools, school districts and in our state.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges the committee to vote yes on HB 4132. Please codify and fund the Oregon Student Health Survey and provide the critical resources necessary to help schools and communities make data-informed decisions about the health and well-being of their students now and for years to come.

Sincerely, Emily McLain Executive Director Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

² https://geo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=4bf3974813d4436793660897cb923311

³ https://geo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=4bf3974813d4436793660897cb923311