

February 3, 2020

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee on Education:

The academic success of students is deeply impacted by a nexus 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. On the behalf of Northwest Regional ESD, I respectfully request the committee's support of House Bill 4132, the Oregon Student Health Survey Bill, to give educators and health partners the necessary information to support the health, well-being, and academic achievement of Oregon youth.

The Oregon Student Health Survey is an anonymous and voluntary research-based survey currently administered to 6th, 8th, and 11th graders. As the only source of statewide data on school climate and the health and well-being of Oregon students, the survey provides essential data that help schools and communities focus on the things that are crucial to ensuring successful youth development, including: access to health and dental care; social/emotional wellbeing; mental health (including experiences of depression or suicidal ideation); sexual activity and HIV/AIDS knowledge; school safety and bullying; housing security; nutrition and physical activity; tobacco, vaping, and substance use; healthy relationships and more.

Schools, agencies, non-profit organizations, local public health authorities, and community groups use the survey data to provide base-line and evaluation information required for grants and to make data-driven decisions when planning and evaluating activities and programs that facilitate learning and promote health, prevent injury, and reduce high risk behaviors among youth.

We need accurate data to create metrics; support accountability and transparency; and drive effective decision-making. 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. Currently Public Health programs at OHA pool limited programmatic dollars to fund survey administration, but the agency lacks the capacity to provide schools and districts that participate with meaningful feedback or technical assistance on what their data "say," leaving schools unaware of the wealth of information available about their student population and without the necessary information to make data-informed decisions.

Northwest Regional ESD 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,



Brian Bain
Director of Research, Assessment and Evaluation
Northwest Regional ESD