



RE: HB 2368

Chair Alonso Leon
Vice-Chair Neron
Vice-Chair Weber
Members of the House Committee on Education

March 10, 2021

Dear Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the House Committee on Education, on behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), I would like to **express support for the -2 amendment for HB 2368.**

APANO unites Asian and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work. We strive to build a better future where we treat each other with dignity and compassion.

This pandemic has brought unexpected and heartbreaking circumstances for Oregonians. It has shifted our dynamics of interacting and learning, especially for our K-12 students. However, barriers to mental health in Oregon are nothing new. Towards the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw that **over 50% of youth had said they were struggling with their mental health.** Comprehensive Distance Learning has only made a greater impact on their mental health.

Our organizing work at APANO leads with the belief that **those most impacted by an issue should be the ones shaping the solutions.** This includes the critical voices of youth. As the Asian Youth Organizer at APANO, I get the chance to work with high school youth across Oregon who are passionate about social justice for API communities and more. I'd like to share thoughts from one of our youth organizers and one of our youth members.

One of our youth organizers says "as a high school student, this law is imperative to addressing the well-being of students. Primary school counselors' duties are stretched to encompass a wide variety of different needs, from college counseling to behavior intervention to mental health services. Right now, myself and peers I have spoken to **do not feel comfortable speaking with counselors as they are often unavailable and are not equipped to handle our specific situations.** Trauma-informed professionals at schools acknowledges the needs of students while also providing support for existing counselors, nurses, and other staff, allowing them to allocate more time to addressing other immediate needs."



A youth member says “having better informed services to help students and staff would greatly benefit their wellbeing. Especially during these times when quarantine has required us to stay indoors, people have had reduced contact with their resources or support. Not only that but it would help build trust between students and adults. Where previously a student may have hesitated to reach out to an adult at school. Speaking for the stories I’ve heard from peers, they struggle with things like anxiety or opening up to people. These stem from issues that occurred way back when they were younger. By providing these trauma-informed approaches, these needs will be addressed and could prevent students from developing mental illnesses in the future.”

We are also proud to be a **partner of the Oregon Partners for Education Justice**, a cross-cultural network of community-based organizations, culturally-specific service providers, and education advocates who are championing an inclusive, equitable, racially just, and community-centered public education system for Oregon. We collectively support HB 2368 through our [2021 Legislative Agenda](#).

By adding more services in schools that are culturally-responsive and trauma-informed, we create a safer environment for our students to go back to, and a **place where all BIPOC students can receive the care that they deserve**. Thank you for your consideration and we respectfully urge you to vote yes for the -2 amendment for HB 2368.

Sincerely,
Lanea Olson
Asian Youth Organizer