

Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Hudson, Vice-Chair Wright, and Members of the Committee:

As a high school sophomore, I have seen firsthand the impact that mental health issues can have on my peers and classmates. Too often, these struggles go unnoticed or untreated, leading to a sense of hopelessness and despair. This is why I wholeheartedly support HB 2646, which requires the Department of Education to provide a program to train school employees on the signs and symptoms of mental illness, depression, and substance abuse disorders.

This bill is crucial because it recognizes that mental health is just as important as physical health and acknowledges the need for mental health support in schools. It provides school employees with the necessary tools to identify and assist students in crisis, helping to prevent a situation from escalating and ensuring that students receive the support they need.

Furthermore, the bill requires school districts to designate mental health points of contact to coordinate and facilitate access to appropriate mental health and substance abuse disorder services and resources. This is essential because it ensures that students and their families have access to the resources they need, even after school hours.

In conclusion, HB 2646 is a step in the right direction for addressing the mental health needs of students. I hope that other states will follow in Oregon's footsteps and invest in programs and resources that support the mental health and well-being of students. Thank you for considering this bill and for making mental health a priority.

Sincerely,

Devon Lawson-McCourt

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