

Submitter: Jonathan Rochelle  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure: HB2656

Representative Neron and Committee Members-

My name is Jonathan Rochelle and I am PhD Candidate and evaluation lead with the University of Oregon's Suicide Prevention Lab (UOSPL). I also am here on behalf of the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide where I have served on the Schools Committee for the past five years. The Alliance is a statewide advisory committee comprised of subject matter experts, people with lived experience, researchers, and leaders that advises the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) on matters related to Oregon's Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan (YSIPP). The Oregon Student Health Survey (OSHS) is a comprehensive student-level survey that includes questions around mental health and well-being, student safety, means-access, suicide attempt history, and suicidal ideation. Currently, the majority of Oregon school districts do not participate in administering the survey. The Alliance has prioritized support for HB-2656 because by requiring the OSHS, schools districts and schools will be able to make better data-informed decisions for their local suicide prevention efforts.

The lack of the universal implementation of the Oregon Student Health Survey (OSHS) has caused this resource to be underutilized by both researchers and schools. By mandating participation by all school districts in Oregon, we would have a more accurate understanding of the prevalence of youth suicidality in schools, and any differences across contextual factors such as region classification (i.e., urban, suburban, rural, and frontier). Additionally, districts would then be able to make data-informed decisions based on their survey results, which would also help schools make better and more targeted suicide prevention plans and mental health promotion efforts as required by Adi's Act. Because many schools and school districts do not participate in the survey, individual schools and research teams often create their own surveys, which keeps this information and knowledge localized and cutoff from a centralized source.

Recent research conducted by the UOSPL, in partnership with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and Lines-for-Life, has identified stigma as a leading barrier to students seeking out suicidality and mental health supports and services. Additionally this barrier hinders school staffs' ability to engage students, staff, families, and community members in effective suicide prevention efforts. The universal implementation of the OSHS would help address stigma by making conversations around suicide prevention more mainstream. A common misconception in communities is that by asking about suicide it increases suicide risk. Research has shown this is not the case (Dazzi et al., 2014). In fact, a meta-analysis by Blades and colleagues (2018) found that across 18 studies, there was a significant reduction in suicidal ideation in participants who were asked about suicide. Importantly, when

asking about suicide, such as in a survey, information and resources around getting support and services (e.g., 988 line) should be included.

Please support this important bill. Thank you.

Jonathan Rochelle, MS

#### References

Blades, C. A., Stritzke, W. G., Page, A. C., & Brown, J. D. (2018). The benefits and risks of asking research participants about suicide: A meta-analysis of the impact of exposure to suicide-related content. *Clinical psychology review*, 64, 1-12.

Dazzi, T., Gribble, R., Wessely, S., & Fear, N. T. (2014). Does asking about suicide and related behaviours induce suicidal ideation? What is the evidence?.

*Psychological medicine*, 44(16), 3361-3363.