

Submitter: Ann Kapser  
On Behalf Of: GMHPN  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure: HB2646

Dear House Committee on Education,

I am grateful that there are people in Oregon trying to ameliorate the mental health of our students. This bill, by unintended consequences, may do the very opposite we are trying to achieve.

I strongly oppose this bill for several reasons:

1. It makes teachers, administrators and other students in the roles of "min-clinicians" always on the look-out for deficits in student behavior, not strengths.
2. Some "signs and symptoms" are actually regular adolescent behavior and we do not want to medicalize being a teenager who is growing and learning.
3. Psychiatric labels can cause great harm if given at a young age. Self-stigma due to be ostracized for being "different" can kill. It is better to work with the student directly on concerning behaviors at that time. Due to brain and emotional growth, what once was a symptom or diagnosis may be gone in a year, and the psychiatric label may still be there.
4. Students are just still learning to communicate in classrooms in 2023 and be in groups after a couple years of unnatural learning environments due to COVID. Let's do strengths-based support as they develop.
5. I instructed this national curriculum for 7 years in Portland, Oregon City and statewide and had to stop teaching it as the people in classes complained of discrimination in the curriculum towards people with mental health issues and those from other cultures and disabilities.
6. High schools students such as the Lincoln High School Mental Health Club (Portland) and The Lotus Project organize student-led efforts. These should be emphasized and supported.
7. The financial burden is still not yet determined, and it seems that it will cost more than working on mutual teenage peer-support programs, healthy technology that appeals to younger ages and support for good nutrition and help for parents.

8. No youth testified for this bill, only people from organizations with a vested financial interest in supporting it.

9. What students crave and thrive in is healthy community. This type of teaching creates more division than community.

Thank you for considering these factors. The students know what works for them. Let's support them in creating innovative, strengths-based solutions.

Sincerely,

Ann Kasper, MA, CPSS  
GMHPN