

Submitter: Amy Andreas
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB2959
To: House Committee on Education
From: Amy Andreas, Occupational Therapist (OT)
RE: Support for HB 2959

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Wright and Hudson and members of the committee–

My name is Amy Andreas, I have been an occupational therapist with Salem Keizer Public Schools for 9 years, and I am here to express my support for House Bill 2959.

As a trained health professional in schools, I am licensed and practice within a school system that can sometimes be in conflict with one another. We believe our students deserve the best possible educational journey, and we know that the barriers that provide for these conflicting rules to our licensure are systemic, so we know the solutions will take long-term commitment and dedication.

Over the years that I've worked for Salem Keizer, my caseload has increased significantly. I started with about 5 schools during my first year and went up to 10 this year, with a few additional alternative education programs as well. This increase in caseload size is consistent across the occupational therapy department. One reason for the increasing caseloads is our staffing shortage, caused by a high burnout rate due to the stressors of this role, as evidenced by the proposal of this bill. Along with high turnover, the high caseloads also result in limited time to adequately meet the needs of students. There is little time to complete training to ensure proficient follow through of protocols and supports, and less time to prepare for meetings and meet with teams to ensure our role is fully understood and utilized appropriately.

OTs are responsible for making the determination if a student needs an OT evaluation. Often, other educators want to make, and do make, this recommendation, without consulting us. According to our practice act, it is the OT's professional responsibility to make that determination. There have been many occasions where myself and my colleagues have been requested to do OT evaluations, and it was determined that OT services weren't necessary. If we had been given a chance to assist the educator team in the process of determining whether an evaluation needed to be completed, we could have potentially avoided doing unnecessary work that took time away from our already large caseloads.

One clear concern expressed by members from all licensed professionals working in an education setting is the disconnect between requirements of licensure and the

realities of practice in schools. That is why we need HB 2959, which will create a Task Force to examine the scope of practice for each type of licensed health professional in schools, establish criteria to help define when procedures are inconsistent with scope of practice, and provide recommendations for alignment.

Thank you for your time today and I encourage the committee to vote YES on HB 2959.

Amy Andreas
Occupational Therapist