

February 13, 2023

To: House Committee on Education

From: Olivia Bass, Early Childhood Special Education Occupational Therapist

RE: Support for HB 2959

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

My name is Olivia Bass and I am here today as an Occupational Therapist of 12 years with the Multnomah Early Childhood Program, and I am here to express my support for House Bill 2959.

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

The majority of administrators in education hold an educational license, not a health care license, yet they are making decisions that affect our role, how we practice, and our professional licenses. It is our professional judgment and our practice acts that should define the intervention we provide.

Sometimes we are asked to wear hats that are not within our scope of practice. For example I have been asked to work as an "Early Childhood Special Education Staff" so I could serve children with speech and language therapy needs when an SLP was not available due to high caseload sizes. I am not educated to work as an SLP and am not licensed to do so in the state of Oregon. This seems like a conflict with my Occupational Therapy license, the job I was hired to do, and a detriment to that child who requires specialized support to address their communication needs.

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.

Olivia Bass

Occupational Therapist

Multnomah County, Early Childhood, Portland, Oregon