

3/14/23

Senate Education Committee

Re: Support SB 549

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

We are students at Churchill High School in Eugene, Oregon and members of our School-Based Health Center's Youth Action Council. Since the pandemic, we've noticed more and more students struggling with school. It seems like more of them are skipping classes and rather than punishing them, we'd like to see school staff look into the root causes of these absences. Our Youth Action Council polled Churchill students earlier this year and they listed the following top health concerns they face or see as challenges for others on campus: Mental Health, Nutrition, Sleep and Substance Abuse. Teachers have had to act like counselors. More students are needing 504 plans to support them at school. You need a diagnosis to get that support. School-Based Health Centers can help with that. We've been trying to get the word out to students about this valuable resource.

We have also reached out to two other high schools in our district that do not have a School-Based Health Centers. We sent them a survey and received 699 student responses from one school and 467 from the other. Over 80% of students who responded at both schools (and 100% of staff who responded) indicated they think their school would heavily utilize a School-Based Health Center. We are meeting with school leaders to discuss next steps for getting better health care access to them.

We know School-Based Health Centers are important and open the door to health services including mental health. They need money to function. SB 549 will help support the necessary work they do to care for students, regardless of their financial status. Some students are uninsured or have high deductibles, which can be a big barrier to care. School-Based Health Centers also help teens learn how to navigate the healthcare system. They build confidence so students can better advocate for themselves.

Please listen to the youth directly affected by SB 549 and pass it. By keeping young people healthy, we help them become healthy, successful adults.

Thank you,

The Churchill High School Youth Action Council

Supported by its Coordinator, Tricia Schroffner FNP