



**SB 549: School Health Crisis Response Act**  
Letter of Support | March 18, 2023

To: The Senate Committee on Education

From: Ava Colleran, Oregon Student Voice

RE: Support for SB 549, School Health Crisis Response Act

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the committee-

My name is Ava Colleran, and I am a high school student in Portland, Oregon. I am also a member of [Oregon Student Voice](#), a student-led organization that empowers students to be authentic partners with K-12 decision makers.

Oregon Student Voice asks you to pass SB 549, the School Health Crisis Response Act. There is a youth mental health crisis in Oregon and your support is critical to ensuring that youth and families are able to fully access the education that every child deserves.

I personally see the mental health issues students are dealing with every day at school. Students show up to school exhausted and entirely unmotivated. I have seen the stress from school cause students to seem completely burnt out. Students often feel that there is no one who they can talk to about or help them deal with the anxiety associated with school. I believe that part of this problem is the lack of mental health resources available to students. And the resources that we do have, such as counselors, are often overworked or very difficult to gain access to. However, I believe that the services proposed in this bill are evidence-based and equitable approaches to addressing the mental health and behavioral issues that are impacting kids and the school environment, and could help improve student's mental health.

Students learn better when they feel healthy, physically and mentally. It is extremely difficult to effectively learn when one is feeling depressed or anxious. Schools not only have the responsibility of meeting student's educational needs, but making sure that their health needs are being met. This is not limited to student's physical health, but their mental health as well.

The pandemic shined a light on the mental health issues being experienced by young people. As well as the disparities that already existed for Black, Indigenous, and People/Youth of Color. School health resources provide accessible care for everyone, so all students can have the support they need to learn.

Young people in Oregon, and nationwide, are struggling with anxiety and depression at unprecedented levels. Action must be taken to support these students and their mental health. These new levels of anxiety and depression being experienced by young people means that we need new programs and resources to help address these problems. SB 549 would help ensure that all students have access to the care and support they need to cope and live fulfilling lives.

We thank you for your time and efforts to improve the well-being of children and youth across the state. Oregon Student Voice urges you to vote yes on SB 549 to pass the School Health Crisis Response Act and give students access to the resources they need to improve their physical and mental health.

Thank you for your consideration,

*Ava Colleran*  
Oregon Student Voice