



SUBJECT: HB 2618

TO: Representative McLain and Senator Patterson

As constituents and school-based health practitioners, the Occupational Therapy Association of Oregon (OTAO), American Physical Therapy Association Oregon (APTA Oregon), and Oregon Speech-Language & Hearing Association (OSHA) are issuing a joint statement in support of HB 2618: Workload Study Bill.

HB 2618, the Workload Study Bill, would require the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to conduct a study to identify the best methodology for determining the appropriate workload for school-based health practitioners. It is important to differentiate between *workload* and *caseload*. *Caseload* is simply the number of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), and 504 Plans served by school-based professionals through direct and/or indirect service delivery options. In contrast, *workload* refers to *all* activities required and performed by school-based professionals in the school setting. These school-based health professionals have requirements for collaborating & consulting with school staff & parents as well as community-based professionals, facilitating access and participation in the general education curriculum, providing direct, indirect services, and response to intervention services (RTI) within the student contact day at school. Workload also includes non-therapeutic activities which include, but are not limited to, development and maintenance of adaptive equipment and visual aids, drive time between sites, time-spent in special education meetings, provision of professional development, research on low-incidence disorders and evidence based practices, etcetera. Additionally, they have an increased burden of billing and documentation requirements on top of the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) mandates.

There are currently no guidelines or requirements for how school-based agencies (birth-21 years of age) determine the workload assigned to occupational therapy practitioners (OTs), physical therapy practitioners (PTs), and speech-language pathology practitioners (SLPs) in Oregon schools. The lack of workload requirements for school-based health practitioners has many potential negative impacts: 1) affect student outcomes and program quality; 2) potentially violate state & federal mandates, including Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), IDEA, and Free & Appropriate Public Education (FAPE); 3) may violate professionals' codes of ethics; 4) professionals become overburdened, have less job satisfaction leading to potential burn out, ultimately diminishing patient access to the care services they need. Many school-based health practitioners end up leaving the schools to seek employment in medical-based settings such as hospitals, out-patient clinics, and private practices. These settings typically have measures in place to control workload and offer significantly better compensation than schools provide.

Establishing a methodology, such as a workload calculator, would help school administration understand appropriate workload for school-based practitioners. Appropriate workloads for school-based health practitioners will ensure that these federally mandated services (occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech & language therapy) continue to be provided in Oregon schools in an efficacious manner while upholding the professional code of ethics. OTAO, APTA Oregon, and OSHA are eager to work with and support the ODE in their establishment of a workload methodology. Inclusion of our voices in establishing the methodology is pivotal to ensure all aspects are taken into consideration.

Katie O'Day MOT, OTR/L
Lelia Boniadi OTD, OTR/L
Legislative Co-Chairs
OTAO

Amanda Brown, MS, CCC-SLP
VP of Governmental Affairs
OSHA

Jeremy Hilliard, DPT, PT
President
APTA Oregon