

Submitter: Hilary Nichols

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB4070

Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee:

My name is Hilary Nichols, and I am a Health Equity Community Organizer at a Federally Qualified Health Center in SE Portland, which also happens to provide school-based care at a PPS school.

I'm writing in support of HB 4070, which provides critical resources that youth and families across Oregon need now. Oregon is ranked last in the nation for youth mental health, and it's showing in our schools through rampant behavior issues and high rates of chronic absenteeism. HB 4070 provides evidence-based resources that will be quickly available for schools to support youth mental and physical health. A study conducted in Oregon found that youth are 10-21x more likely to seek mental health support at a school-based health center (SBHC) and that SBHCs that increased mental health capacity were 12% less likely to report a depressive episode; 16% less likely to report suicidal ideation; and 18% less likely to report a suicide attempt.

I support this bill because my mother is a retired school-based nurse. I learned from her the importance of accessible healthcare in a school setting, as her patients were often only able to get reliable healthcare through school. Additionally, I myself benefitted from school-based health centers as a student. Being able to access mental and physical health care at school was so important to me because it helped me excel academically, athletically, and socially.

Our youth need this now and these resources will allow for an immediate increase in our capacity to support them. I urge you to vote yes on HB 4070."

Thank you,
Hilary Nichols