

“Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Cameron Fischer, and I am a member of the Bend-La Pine Schools’ Board of Directors. I am also a long time educator, having taught for Oregon State University for nearly 20 years - my courses include Adolescent Development, Families and Poverty, and Family, School and Community Collaboration. Prior to my career in higher education, I worked as a special education teacher in Title I schools for nearly a decade supporting children and youth who experienced significant trauma, poverty, and health disparities. I also serve on OSU’s Children, Youth and Families Committee and the Deschutes County Behavioral Health Advisory Board.

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.

Our youth and families need these critical resources now. These resources save lives. I support this bill because Bend-La Pine schools have seen the incredibly positive impact of school based health centers due to partnerships that have developed out of necessity, such as that of Healthy Schools, a collaboration between the District and Deschutes County Behavioral Health. Yet, many districts and counties throughout Oregon cannot do this alone and students are suffering tremendously.

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,

Dr. Cameron Fischer  
Bend-La Pine Schools’ Board of Directors