



Carla Gay, Executive Director of Innovation & Partnerships

## Gresham-Barlow School District No. 10Jt

1331 NW Eastman Parkway, Gresham, OR 97030-3825  
[www.gresham.k12.or.us](http://www.gresham.k12.or.us)

Phone: (503) 261-4551  
email: [gay@gresham.k12.or.us](mailto:gay@gresham.k12.or.us)

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Chair Nosse and Members of the Committee:

My name is Carla Gay, and I am the Executive Director of Innovation & Partnerships for Gresham-Barlow School District. In this role I provide supervision and support for our school based counseling, social work and mental health services.

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. According to a survey conducted in Oregon, students are 10-21x more likely to seek mental health support when services are provided on site by a mental health specialist. Youth with access to School Based Health and Mental Health services 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 I have seen first hand the impact of having regular and culturally responsive mental health services available to our students. I have also seen when that is absent and the way in which our school counselors, social workers and mental health partners struggle to fill the gap. In our district, we have 2 full time mental health providers from Multnomah County shared among several schools. The need is so great, they are often operating in triage mode with a long waiting list.

In addition, our district has prioritized mental health services to supplement what providers can bill to Oregon Health Plan but we have stretched those dollars to the limit with our community based mental health partners. Our staff are burning out and our students are losing out. Students in middle and high school are turning to self medicating with drugs and alcohol at unprecedented rates to cope with the lack of mental health support.

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,

  
Carla Gay