



Date: February 5, 2024

To: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

From: Oregon Health Equity Alliance (OHEA)

RE: Support for HB 4070, School-Based Health Center Funding

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, Vice-Chair Nelson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Esther Kim and I am the Director of the Oregon Health Equity Alliance (OHEA). OHEA is one of ten regional health equity coalitions across Oregon and we serve Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties. We are a people of color-led collaborative, organized to center and uplift the wisdom of our communities of color through racial justice informed health equity policies and practices as part of the movement to dismantle white supremacy and shift the imbalance of power.

We submit this testimony today in support of House Bill 4070, School-Based Health Center Funding. School-Based Health Clinics (SBHCs) offer a range of health services to school aged youth spanning from wellness exams and sports physicals, sick visits, preventative care screenings, immunizations, mental health and alcohol and drug counseling, reproductive health services, as well as connecting students to social supports and offering resources like food and clothing. From 2021-2022, reasons for visits were split 55% for primary care and 41% behavioral health services.

Our school district leaders have emphasized how social determinants of health and impacts of the pandemic on learning have created more disparity for our youth with Oregon having the 4th highest rate of absenteeism of any state, 36.1% of students missing 10% or more of the school year.

28 of 32 counties in Oregon offer SBHCs. This funding request would provide an inflationary increase, leveraging \$3 for every \$1 the state invests, providing accessible care where youth and families are, and reducing the need for emergency care with preventative screenings. These funds would also support School Health Services Planning Grants to offer more nimble, responsive care and offer grants to increase mental health support in schools with and without School-Based Health Clinics, and create bonds for capital construction SBHCs.

Investing in School-Based Health Clinics has a direct and meaningful impact on our youth and Oregon lawmakers have an opportunity to sustain this important and timely work to build up accessible and impactful mental and physical school based health care. OHEA strongly urges you to support HB 4070.

Thank you for your time.

Oregon Health Equity Alliance