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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support of HB 4151
House Committee on Behavioral Health and Healthcare
February 2nd, 2024

Chair Nosse, Vice Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, members of the committee, thank you for your time today and for starting the first day right by hearing HB 4151.

For the record, my name is Lisa Reynolds and I serve as State Representative for House District 34 in Washington County.

I often talk in this building about upstream solutions - how investing in young Oregonians, giving them the support they need, and setting them up for healthy lives, pays huge dividends down the road. A huge piece of that is ensuring that our children have access to behavioral health services. However, we have a crucial workforce shortage – that means not enough school counselors, therapists, child psychiatrists, and others.

I often think about what I hear from teachers and from principals - it's not so much that we need a limit on class sizes, tho that can be helpful, it's that we need another adult or two in the room to give needed attention to a student that is struggling, whether it's academically or emotionally. I picture a student, who is feeling bad about themselves, or who is acting out, — this is a call for help, not discipline. This is when our trauma-informed approach asks “how can I help?” And we need someone to be there, in the classroom, in a clinic, over zoom...to ask that question. And, I am finding more and more that this person does not need to be a PhD psychologist, even those PhD psychologists are some of my favorite people on the planet. We can get way more creative with building the workforce we need.

And, as I have completely re-tooled what I emphasize in my well child visits in order to inject (no pun intended) social-emotional learning, I am pleasantly surprised that, more and more, kids know these things. Families and schools are coming together to learn and teach about breathing techniques, about empathy, about managing our feelings of anger, which are usually rooted in pain. We just need more people around our kids helping them with this vital human development curriculum.

This bill is what I like to think of as the upstream solution for the upstream solution. To have a healthy population, we need healthy kids, and to have healthy kids, we need a strong workforce - in our education system and in our behavioral health system. HB 4151 will aim to strengthen this workforce.