

OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE



SUPPORT HB 2729

February 3rd, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE

Chair Neron and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your time and consideration. My name is Eli Cox and I am the Abuse Prevention Coordinator with the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (Oregon SATF). **Along with our colleagues, we urge you to support HB 2729, which provides critical resources to better support school based health centers (SBHC). Youth and families across Oregon have been asking for investments to support their mental health and well-being for years, and it is time we act.**

Oregon is ranked 49th in the nation for youth mental health and it's showing in our schools through troubling behavioral issues and high rates of chronic absenteeism. **HB 2729 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 10-21 times more likely to seek mental health support at an SBHC than other care centers 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 for the students in their care.

Alongside the data above, Oregon SATF supports this bill because providing resources that connects youth to mental health supports directly aids our mission of improving the prevention and response to sexual violence throughout Oregon. For youth who are survivors of one or more forms of violence, connecting with a trusted and known provider at their SBHC can help halt harm and/or be a key moment in their healing journey. Also, SBHCs can help prevent violence from ever happening in the first place by offering resources and information to youth who are experiencing high rates of stress that could otherwise manifest in harmful behaviors. SBHCs are proven protective factors in healthy communities.

Across our state, youth and families should not have to continue to experience being isolated from help or have preventable tragedies occur. Our youth need this now, and these resources will allow for an immediate increase in communities capacity to support them. **For this reason and many more, we urge you to vote yes on HB 2729.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eli Cox".

Eli Cox - Abuse Prevention Coordinator
Eli@oregonsatf.org

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon Rose".

Shannon Rose - Executive Director
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