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February 4, 2025

Re: Support for Summer Learning (HB 2729): to modify the amounts of grants for school-based health centers for inflation.

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

On behalf of Clackamas Women's Services (CWS), we are pleased to submit testimony in support of HB 2729 which will adjust grant amounts for school-based health centers (SBHC) for inflation. Our schools and families are being overwhelmed by a youth mental health crisis, and we must provide innovative resources to create a continuum of care for youth and families, and address health issues and disrupted learning.

The mission of Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) is to break the isolation of domestic and sexual violence. Incorporated in 1985 as Clackamas County's first domestic violence shelter, CWS is a community-based organization providing comprehensive services to survivors of domestic/dating violence, sexual assault, child and elder abuse, human trafficking, exploitation, and stalking. We provide violence prevention education to over 25 schools in Clackamas County for over 8,000 students. Additionally, we provide summer learning opportunities for youth who have witnessed or experienced family violence through our Camp HOPE America – Oregon program, which provides three summer camps and a yearlong mentoring program.

In addition to Camp HOPE, CWS has youth advocates co-located at six schools in three school districts, providing services to students at over 15 schools throughout Clackamas County to support youth who have witnessed or experienced domestic or sexual violence. These youth are at a higher risk for behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. And traumatic experiences within their families can create additional worries and stress.

We have found that being available at schools has allowed students to have the support they need to process their experiences so they can focus and be successful in school. Ensuring we can continue to provide these services makes a big difference for the more than 300 youth we serve each year.

HB 2729 will provide critical support for youth throughout Oregon, specifically funding:

- **Planning grant** opportunities for 5 local communities to implement a school-based health center or school nurse model according to their priority needs. (\$600,000)
- **Inflationary increase** of \$10,000 to the school-based health center base rate and tied to inflation moving forward. (\$900,000)
- **Increase the school-based mental health fund** to provide additional mental health and substance use services in schools either directly or through SBHCs. (\$7.85 million)

In closing, passing HB 2729 will foster success for all Oregon's students. A study conducted in Oregon found that youth are 10-21x more likely to seek mental health support at SBHCs. Furthermore, 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 above reasons, we hope you will support School-Based Health Services (HB 2729). Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melissa Erlbaum".

Melissa Erlbaum
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine Koch".

Catherine Koch
Counseling & Youth Program Director