

Submitter: Leilanni Lopez-Flores  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2729

Chair Neron and Members of the Committee:

My name is Leilanni Lopez-Flores, and I am a student at the Center for Advanced Learning and Springwater Trail High School.

I'm writing in support of HB 2729, which provides critical resources that youth and families across Oregon need now. Oregon is ranked 49th 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 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 10-21x more likely to seek mental health support at a school-based health center (SBHC) 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.

I strongly support this bill because I wish that we had a center at school. Starting high school was a big change for me, and I didn't know how to deal with it. Throughout my first years, I dealt with racism and bullying. I didn't have the resources at school to properly deal with it, and it was hard for me to ask for help. When I asked for help from a therapist, I was on a waitlist for three months. If I had a center for school, I believe I would have gotten the help I needed in no or little time. Having a center for my school would make me more comfortable and bring more joy because it's closer to where I am for 5 days of the week. When I talked to my friends about their mental health, they said they were feeling stressful with classwork and family and friends drama. I know that many students in school deal with this, and I believe that having a health center will make them want to seek help quicker.

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 2729.

Thank you,  
Leilanni Lopez-Flores