

My name is Moira Finnegan, and I am a speech-language pathologist (SLP) with Portland Public Schools. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB2423, which will establish the School-Based Health Professionals Taskforce to ensure that licensing board rules accurately reflect the realities of working in school settings.

Lack of knowledge about the role of health professionals in the school setting and the licensure requirements we are required to follow can lead to administrative decisions that put our students' safety at risk. These decisions also put health professionals at risk for working in violation of our state licensure requirements and professional ethics.

An example of this happened in my district last year, when special education administrators asked all of the SLPs in our district to help support students with dysphagia. Dysphagia is a swallowing disorder that puts people at risk for choking or aspirating (drawing food or liquid into the lungs when eating or drinking).

Dysphagia management is a highly specialized area of SLP practice. SLPs who work in dysphagia management need hundreds of hours of supervised clinical experience in order to properly support people with dysphagia. While all SLPs have coursework on dysphagia in graduate school, most SLPs who work in schools do not have the additional training and experience needed to safely support students with dysphagia.

Our special education administrators maintained that all school-based SLPs in the district could support students with dysphagia, even though most of us did not have the required skills or training. If the School-Based Health Professionals Taskforce had been in place, it would have been a tremendously helpful resource to aid our administrators in understanding our roles and licensure requirements.

I urge you to support HB2423 so that Oregon's licensing boards can establish clear, appropriate guidelines for school-based health professionals, improving student safety and supporting health professionals in schools to abide by their licensure requirements and professional ethics.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Moira Finnegan, MS, CCC-SLP