



Testimony in support of SB 485

School communication following suspected suicide

February 6, 2019

Dear Chair Wagner and Members of Senate Committee on Education,

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP), we support SB 485, the revision to the original 2015 bill on communicating following suspected suicides and implementing community suicide response and postvention to address loss and potential contagion risk.

Local mental health authorities, through delegation to their community mental health programs, have implemented the communication and postvention plan, with differing levels of success dependent on collaboration with local schools. Including schools in the communication and suicide postvention process would greatly improve the effectiveness of this policy. We would add that any public school district, public university or private post-secondary institution should inform the local mental health authority simultaneously with the Oregon Health Authority to enable immediate response in the community among the local system partners as directed in the community postvention plan.

CONNECT, a community postvention training program that brings Education, Mental Health and other local systems together to develop the communication and postvention plan, has been rolled out in response to the original bill. To date, we have 66 trainers in 10 counties (Deschutes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lane, Linn, Benton, Malheur, Umatilla, Yamhill and Klamath) and five more counties will go through the CONNECT community planning and a train-the-trainer by the end of June: Coos, Curry, Columbia, Clackamas and Marion. This program, funded by OHA, has provided expert and timely technical assistance from national experts on suicide postvention best practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 485.

Sincerely,

Cherryl L. Ramirez
Director, AOCMHP