

Representative Margaret Doherty, Chair  
Representative Teresa Alonso Leon, Vice Chair  
Representative Cheri Helt, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Education

Oregon School Psychologists Association

April 19, 2019

### Support of Senate Bill 52 Relating to Policies on Student Suicide Prevention

The Oregon School Psychologists Association strongly supports Senate Bill 52 Relating to Policies on Student Suicide Prevention, also known as Adi's Act. The Oregon School Psychologists Association represents school psychologists in the state of Oregon--professionals who are committed to the social, emotional, mental and behavioral health of our students.

As the second-leading cause of death for individuals aged 15 to 34 (CDC, 2017), suicide is not a threat that can be ignored by school communities. These statistics are even more stark for students of color, and students identifying as LGBTQA+. Data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention revealed that 42.8% of students identifying as LGBTQA+ experienced suicidal ideation, and 38.2% of LGBTQA+ students had made a plan (2016). A study released by the American Academy of Pediatrics found that the rate of attempted suicide for transgender and genderqueer youth ranged from 29.9% to 50.8% (2018). Homeless youth also experience a higher suicide risk, as found by the American Academy of Pediatrics in a 2018 study. The tragedy of a completed suicide may be compounded by suicide contagion, wherein the rate of others' suicidal behavior increases in the aftermath of a suicide, or by clusters, wherein the rate of completed suicides within a time, place or community increases. Adi's Act offers a concrete path to address these problems, and school psychologists act as key players in the development and implementation of effective, research-based suicide intervention plans.

Schools offer a unique service-delivery opportunity for mental health services, and school psychologists are already doing preventative work with students in kindergarten through 12th grade. We are completing suicide screenings, engaging students in counseling services, and working with school administrations to create welcoming, healthy school climates. The National Association of School Psychologists promotes the development of a plan to recognize and provide support to students at risk of suicide. By having a comprehensive suicide prevention plan in place, school personnel will be able to work with community partners and students' families in a timely and efficacious manner. The Oregon School Psychologists Association urges the passage of Adi's Act--supporting the safety of Oregon students is in our hands. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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