

Kate Brown
Governor



Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs

“Advocating Equality and Diversity”

421 SW Oak St., Portland, OR 97204

O 503.302.9725

Email: oaco.mail@oregon.gov

Website: www.oregon.gov/Hispanic

Testimony in support, SB 52A
House Committee on Education
Monday, April 22, 2019, at 3pm in HR D

Chair Doherty, Vice-Chairs Alonso León and Helt, and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Linda Castillo and I am the chair of the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA). OCHA’s statutory work includes advocating for the Latino community in Oregon. OCHA strongly supports SB 52A, requiring a comprehensive district plan on student suicide prevention. Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important and inclusive bill.

Youth suicide is on the rise in Oregon, and having a coordinated, comprehensive plan for each school district, K-12, is essential. In addition to a plan, it is vital that there are adequate personnel and training opportunities to implement the plan. The 2017 Child County Data Book/Status of Oregon Children & Families states that from 2006 -2015, suicides doubled for youth ages 15-19 years old. From 2000 - 2017, suicide rates for all ages increased by 35%. Suicide is the 2nd cause of death for people 10 - 34 year olds, and, according to the OHA’s Youth Suicide Annual Report, Oregon’s suicide rate is 41% higher than the national average. In 2013, 38% of deaths were suicides, and became the #1 reason for death, and suicide rates are much higher in rural areas because there are fewer mental health providers in those areas.

The number of mental health providers currently in schools is not meeting the need for services, especially in rural areas. In rural settings, students in crisis receive the most help, but there is little capacity left for those students who are struggling but not yet in crisis. Youth in the Latino community are of particular concern: Latinos report the highest rate of suicide attempts for adolescents nationwide, according to the 2015 CDC Suicide & Prevention Report. In Oregon, 26% of Latino youth have considered suicide and 15% have attempted suicide, as compared to 9.8% of white youth attempting suicide, and 10.2% of Black youth attempting suicide. SB 52 is a step in the right direction to bring these numbers down.

We strongly urge that the comprehensive district plans be developed in collaboration with local students, families, and private partners and service providers, in addition to district staff. Having these important stakeholder voices at the table will provide invaluable insights to be incorporated into creating an effective plan.

In addition, personnel implementing the plan need to be available, and well-trained on how to assess, manage and treat students who are considering or attempting suicide, using state of the art

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materials that are trauma-informed and culturally-appropriate. Such clinically-informed materials will contain best practices, prevention models, and post-suicide dissemination of information.

OCHA urges you to support SB 52A.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L. Castillo".

Linda Castillo, Chair