



February 5, 2024

House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support House Bill HB 4070

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin, Vice-Chair Nelson and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,000 supporters statewide. **We strongly support House Bill 4070, which would provide an immediate response to Oregon's youth behavioral health crisis while also developing infrastructure to meet future needs in our schools.**

We are experiencing a youth mental health crisis in this country and Oregon is ranked last for youth mental health in the United States, with the highest rates of depression and limited access to services. Kids cannot learn if they are not healthy, and we are witnessing these health impacts in Oregon schools. Across the state, schools are reporting record behavioral challenges as students return to class — if they do return, that is.

The ACLU of Oregon works with teachers, parents, students, community members, and legislators to ensure equality and dignity for all Oregon youth. Teachers, administrators, and lawmakers have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for students that is conducive to learning. Oregon's youth needs support and schools are at the center of their lives and the heart of our communities. **Placing school-based health centers, school nurses, and mental health providers onsite provides low-barrier access to the care our youth desperately need.**

Health based centers within schools can help assist the physical, mental, and community needs of students. HB 4070 would ensure schools receive the resources needed to address mental health services gaps and needs through grants administered by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). HB 4070 would also direct OHA to modify the amounts of grants for school-based health centers for inflation to ensure the funding is on par with rising costs. The investment in health based centers would improve the care of Oregon's youth by creating easy access to health centers that offer a full range of physical, behavioral and preventive health services without the barriers of cost, transportation, students missing school, and parents missing work.

By passing House Bill 4070, you have an opportunity to affirm Oregon's values and create a future for Oregon by ensuring equality and dignity for all of Oregon's youth. **The ACLU of Oregon urges your support for House Bill 4070 and asks you to pass it out of committee.**

Respectfully,

Kennedy Parish, Communication and Storytelling Associate

For more questions, please email Jessica Maravilla, Policy Director at jmaravilla@aclu-or.org