NEWS RELEASE

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School nurses help our kids stay healthy, focus on learning
SB 111 gives schools a way to pay nurses to serve their students

SALEM – A healthy child is a more effective learning, and Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed into law earlier this week a bill that will give schools the resources they need to have nurses on staff for their students.

Senate Bill 111 – which was championed by Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham) – passed the Senate and House of Representatives unanimously. It allows schools to provide nurses to help keep their students healthy, and to bill Medicaid for those services.

"Every child needs to be healthy in order to learn and be successful," Monnes Anderson said. "School nursing services help create a healthy environment that is much needed in our schools."

School districts, education service districts will be allowed to collaborate with the Oregon Health Authority, Department of Education and other districts to create pilot projects that expand their use of Medicaid billing. Additional resources will offset current costs for nurse services in schools and could be used to invest more in school health services in the future. The Oregon Department of Education is required to report back to the Legislature no later than 2020 on the effectiveness of these programs in increasing access to health care in schools.

Currently, 58 percent of Oregon's children are covered under the Oregon Health Plan, but few districts in Oregon bill the federal Medicaid program to receive compensation for the services that school nurses provide at school. This bill will fill the gap in services by allowing Medicaid funds to pay for a portion of school nurse costs.

Oregon currently falls significantly short of the national and state recommended ratio of one school nurse for every 750 students. The average in the 2014-15 school year was one school nurse for every 2,178 students. This ultimately puts the health and safety of some of Oregon's most vulnerable youth at risk.

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