

5/7/2021 Testimony – Dr. Danna Diaz, Superintendent of Schools

Reynolds High School Student-Based Health Center

Co-Chairs Holvey and Girod, Members of the Committee:

For the record, I am Danna Diaz, Superintendent of Reynolds School District.

Serving nearly 11,000 students in 20 schools from five cities across East Multnomah County, Reynolds strives to meet the health, safety and educational challenges presented by our rapidly changing student demographics. Our district is comprised of a **71% minority population** with more than **70 languages** spoken. Over **80% of our students experience poverty** and **6% of our students experience homelessness**. These experiences impact their health and well-being, which, in turn, impacts their educational outcomes.

Now more than ever, our diverse community deserves equitable access to health care. Study after study reveals how COVID-19 has disproportionately affected minority communities locally and nationally. We are proud to say that as of January 2021, our students have had access to care at our health center, even while we remained in distance learning.

This health center wouldn't have been possible without the broad-based commitment of students, parents, government leaders, and community partners who supported this work. The project also would not have gotten off the ground if not for a lottery bond allocation by the legislature in 2019 to cover our construction costs.

With that promise of funding, our district moved quickly to begin the construction process. Naturally, we were eager to get our students access to care. We also wanted to be a good partner to our medical sponsor, Multnomah County, who would begin to lose state funding if the health center wasn't built by January 2020.

Just as many others were devastated by the economic impacts of the pandemic, Reynolds was informed in July of 2020 that state lottery bonds were being halted and we would not receive our anticipated grant. This leaves us with a \$2.3 million hole in our budget.

Without your support, that's \$2.3 million that won't be put back into our classrooms. While the health center has supported our students' need for care, we know that they will also need a lot of academic support this coming school year, and we ne need every dollar to meet those needs.

As the Superintendent of the Reynolds School District, I apply an equity-focused, student-centered lens for every decision I make. This decision is crystal clear. Meeting our students' health needs should *not* come at the expense of serving them academically. I ask you to provide the funding we were allocated in 2019. Thank you.