TO: Oregon Education Investment Board
FROM: Kasandra Griffin, Upstream Public Health
DATE: February 7, 2012
RE: Health in Education

UPSTREAM PUBLIC HEALTH

Chair Golden and Members of the Board,

My name is Kasandra Griffin. I am the Policy Manager for School Health at Upstream Public Health, a statewide organization focused on improving the health of Oregonians. At Upstream Public Health, we believe that smart policies can create communities that help people lead healthier, fuller lives.

I am here today to ask you to do everything in your power to integrate health into education reform, so that all students will be healthy and ready to learn. As we heard from Todd Jones earlier today, people around the state are interested in supporting the whole child. Health is a critical foundation before you can educate any part of the child.

By embedding student health into Oregon's education system, we stand to increase school attendance, test scores, graduation rates, and other academic outcomes. And as more students graduate, they are more likely to be employed and insured, and to face fewer health problems and lower health costs over their lifetime.

We applaud the Governor's interest in removing health-related barriers to learning in our pre-Kindergarten children, such as inadequate nutrition and health care. We want to see similar efforts to support the health of K-12 students. We want an education system that fully integrates school-based health care, physical education, health education, nutrition programs, healthy and safe school environments and dental health in ALL schools throughout the state.

You have accepted an extremely important task as stewards of this education reform. On behalf of Upstream Public Health, and the present and future students of Oregon, I have three requests.

The first request is that you create a subcommittee of OEIB focused on health, and on removing the health-related barriers to learning, in the K-12 system. We suggest that the committee would include OEIB members, Oregon Health authority representatives, and educators.

The second request is that you include health outcomes among the items to be included – per local discretion – in the compacts developed between each district and the state. It sounds like that ball is already rolling and we are delighted to hear that the Governor wants to include a public health representative on the pre-K through 12 subcommittee.

The third is that you choose a Chief Education Officer who is committed to addressing health-related barriers to learning, and that you ask that person to focus on these issues in their first year and beyond.

Thank you for the consideration, and for your service. The Healthy Kids Learn Better coalition will be back with more about the intersection of health and education at your March meeting.

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