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**Lawmakers urged to restore school health clinics' money**

School nurses and children's advocates rallied Friday in Salem to urge lawmakers to restore state money for school-based health clinics and increase the number of nurses in schools.

"There are kids being treated in schools by office secretaries and clerks," said Liz Smith of Children First for Oregon.

Gov. John Kitzhaber's 2001-03 budget does not include \$2.5 million for school-based health clinics. Twenty of the 46 clinics in the state get state money, which provides an average of 35 percent of their operating budgets, said Robert Nystrom of the Oregon Health Division. The clinics provide health care to about 20,000 students a year.

Paula Apa-Hall, president of the Oregon School Nurses Association, said Oregon ranks near the bottom in the ratio of nurses to students, about 1 per 2,000. She is the only nurse in the Oregon City School District, responsible for 7,300 students, she said.

Rep. Laurie Monnes Anderson, D-Gresham, has two bills moving through the House that address the issue. HB2820 would provide state grants to help operate school health clinics. HB2960 would provide a nurse for every 1,000 students. Anderson said the money would come from Oregon's share of the national tobacco settlement.

— Steven Carter |