

Chair and members of the committee,

I wish to speak today in favor of senate bill 580 regarding negotiating caseloads and class sizes in bargaining. I have worked in the Salem Keizer School District as a special education paraeducator for 12 years. Currently the teacher I work under has a caseload of 50 and every week the teachers are turning in 3-8 new cases for her to send for referrals. Right now the District assigns one IA per teacher. But thankfully they have given us 2 IA's for my building. This is still not enough help. We need one more teacher to help with paperwork. There have been many times when the LRC teacher has had to cancel groups because she is so behind on paperwork. This means that the kids are not being served their time according to the law. We also have had to come up with our own lesson plans because the teacher does not have time for that and we don't get to meet weekly to talk about the kids. Last year we were asked by classroom teachers to keep some kids in our room more because of behaviors they are having in the classroom. When our special ed teacher said they can't do this without having a meeting, as per the law, the teacher went to the principal who said we need to do what the classroom teachers wanted. This makes our groups over 6 kids per IA, and they are usually at very different levels of learning, and it is not ideal when you are teaching kids with disabilities. Why is it that the classroom teachers have around 30 kids but the special ed teachers have double that? The special ed teachers have so much more paperwork to do on each kid than classroom teachers. They have to come up with different lesson plans to fit different levels of learning. The teachers come up with one lesson plan for the whole class. We need to lower the amount that each special ed teacher has on a caseload. In years past we start the school year with 1 teacher and sometimes if the numbers are high they give us a part time teacher. But then in January they look at the numbers of kids on a caseload and have taken away the part time teacher. Our numbers jump up because of referrals and at spring break they sometimes give us a different part time teacher. I know my LRC teacher has asked the district many times this year for more help. But they refuse. If the teachers were able to negotiate caseload size and class size with the district it would really benefit the paraeducators also. It would help our groups to be smaller and be able to help more precisely what each of the kids' needs. I have been asked in the past if I would want to go back to school to be a special ed teacher. I always say no because I know how much the teacher works and they never get paid for all the extra work that they put in. There is no overtime pay for them. The district talks about equity, but this is so far from being equitable.