

Good afternoon, Chair Dembrow and committee members, for the record, my name is Sara Starlin and I am a speech language pathologist in Springfield Public Schools.

As speech pathologists, our roles in the schools are vast. Most people know that we work on speech sounds, stuttering and vocabulary.... But many don't know that we create plans so students can safely eat at school, support students with complex communication needs through the use of an augmentative or alternative communication system, do voice therapy for students with vocal nodules, deliver social skills instruction to students with autism, and so much more! Outside of therapy, we are collaborating with teachers, supporting students in the classroom, training parents on communication systems, completing evaluations, and managing all of our federally mandated paperwork.

I recently looked at the work that our SLPs do in my district. We serve over 700 students, hold over 125 meetings every spring to help transition preschoolers to kindergarten and conduct over 700 hearing screenings annually. We have 95 students that use an augmentative or alternative communication system. We design our own curriculum, individualized for every student because there isn't anything you can buy off the shelf. Our SLPs in Springfield work hard! How many SLPs do we currently have to complete this work? 15....

If our workload was more manageable, our students would benefit. Group size would be smaller. Students would get more individualized instruction which would help them reach their goals sooner and allow them to spend more time in the general education classroom. We would be able to dedicate time to collaborating with teachers, supporting our students in generalizing their skills. We could complete more thorough evaluations so we could better understand what our students need. We would have time to create highly engaging, evidence-based instruction. Ultimately, this would lead not only to better services for kids but to better job satisfaction which would help Oregon recruit & retain SLPs.

I urge you to support SB 580 to make class size and caseload size a mandatory topic of bargaining so we can provide high quality instruction to Oregon student. Thank you for your time.