



UPDATED March 4, 2021

TO: Senate Education Committee
FR: Morgan Allen, on behalf of COSA
RE: Testimony in opposition to SB 580

Good afternoon Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Morgan Allen and on behalf of the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators and our 2500 members, I am asking you to consider the unintended consequences this legislation will have on our schools and our students. All of our members would agree that the examples of large class sizes you have heard today are not the appropriate learning environments for our students. But without unlimited resources and unlimited space, SB 580 is not the appropriate response to these situations.

The Legislature's Provided the Tools to Address Large Class Sizes - The Student Success Act

The Student Success Act already allows us to address class size and workload issues. School districts across Oregon finally have the resources available to lower class sizes where we can all agree they are too large. The Student Success Act will add over \$800 million to district budgets in the 21-23 biennium. If the staff and community feedback process includes a desire to lower class sizes, there are significant dollars available in the next biennium to make these types of targeted investments.

I have included a one-page attachment from the Oregon Department of Education, dated April 2020, that provided an update on how districts were planning on investing their Student Success Act resources. This data shows that 60% of applications (out of 66 reviewed), or about 40 applicants, intended to use Student Investment Account funds to reduce class size and caseloads. Unfortunately, COVID-19 had a significant impact on funds available in the current school year. But when there are resources available, there is clear and compelling data that districts will make these critical investments.

Senate Bill 580 Takes the Focus Off Our Biggest Challenge - Safely Reopening Schools

This bill takes the focus off what school districts and educators should be most focused on - safely reopening schools to in-person learning as soon as possible. Most Oregon students have not had any in-person learning in close to a year.

Additional resources need to be targeted toward the students who have been most impacted by COVID-19. Summer programs, tutoring, and targeted academic and social emotional supports need to be our priority. Because of the on-going pandemic and safety procedures, class sizes are going to be smaller and it is unlikely that school will ever look like it used to before COVID -19.

Expect Dramatic Impacts When the Next Recession Hits

School districts already spend around 86% of their resources on personnel – primarily teachers. The rest is needed to pay for supplies, utilities, busing and other operational expenses. When Oregon's next recession hits, expect to see significant impacts on the school calendar.

If school districts are required to negotiate class size into contracts you will see school days and programs cut during the next inevitable recession in Oregon. School district budgets are a zero sum game and when budgets need to be reduced you can really only reduce staff or cut days and programs. When budgets are short and cuts must be made – and there are class size requirements in contracts – that only leaves days and programs to cut.

Senate Bill 580, though well intentioned, is not the solution to class size issues. Funding and collaboration is. Class size is already a permissive subject of bargaining and will only make local negotiations more contentious if it becomes a mandatory subject. COSA asks you to reject Senate Bill 580 and let the Student Success Act serve the purpose it was intended to.