

March 23, 2021

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs, and Members of the Committee, now that I have heard all of the testimony presented for and against HB 3130, these are the things I wish to reinforce:

Substitute teachers are obviously employees of the districts they teach in, but this is another area that for-profit corporations are able to pocket taxpayer money for providing a service while taking it out of the pockets of those who provide the service. Note that the districts are paying these third-party staffing agencies the money that the few guest teachers who qualify for PERS benefits ought to receive—as well as the money that most substitute teachers would not qualify for because they do not work 600 hours—while the districts are saving the administrative costs of properly crediting teachers for their service.

This, of course, causes the best and geographically lucky teachers to work for districts that still hire substitutes directly, while these third-party staffing agencies recruit untrained people and send them to multiple districts in violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of the regulations surrounding emergency credentials. (OSTA has anecdotal evidence from a member whose emergency credential was sponsored by a district they never heard of)

I am a fully licensed classroom teacher with 25 years of experience and training—16 years as a substitute for Portland Public Schools. Because I have the freedom to work anywhere, I work for the district that pays the highest daily wage, offers PERS contributions, and affordable health care. The other districts I used to work for dropped me for not taking enough days.

When I am in the classroom, I think of myself as 1) working for the teacher whose lesson plan I am executing, 2) working for the students to whom the lesson is directed, and 3) for the school district whose policies I am carrying out.

As has happened over and over in the 31 years since the passage of Measure 5, the inability to fully fund an adequate education is again being balanced on the backs of those who provide the services.

I am asking that for career substitutes who were outsourced, PERS contributions be assessed retroactively for the benefit of the few of us who do not have our own classrooms. You have testimony that the percentage of substitutes who make being a guest teacher a career is small. My suggestion is that the law place the burden of paying these retroactive contributions on the staffing agencies, rather than on school districts who thought they were saving money by outsourcing.

Since there is no need for third-party staffing agencies to exist, their threats to leave the state if paying retroactive PERS contributions is the cost of continuing to do business should be ignored.

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