



Service Employees International Union, Local 503, OPEU

To: House Business and Labor Committee Chair Holvey and members of the committee

From: SEIU Local 503 – Debbie Koreski

Re: SB 496A

Date: April 26, 2021

SEIU 503 supports **SB 496A** – which removes the prohibition of payment of unemployment insurance benefits to nonprofessional employees providing school food services in an educational institution and for federal Head Start program employees during the period between two successive academic years or terms. Senate Bill 496 extends UI benefits to this much needed but oft-times neglected work force who provide essential services to students and support families during these most trying times.

SEIU 503 represents a little more than 500 workers at Portland Public Schools. About 300 are custodians and the other 200 work in the Nutrition Services departments. Our members have been on site daily during the pandemic - as we maintain and provide key student services and support their success. And we know the importance of having nourished and healthy students as they made their way through the pandemic and as they return to classrooms. There are 90 cafeterias at PPS that serve 31,000 students – almost a third of those students qualify for free or reduced lunches.

We strongly support the flexibility that we believe Senate Bill 496 intends to provide to workers in food services. SEIU also supports extending this protection to front line workers at Oregon’s seventeen community colleges and seven public universities who experience similar challenges with Oregon unemployment insurance program.

Thank you.

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