



Oregon School Employees Association

www.osea.org

State Office: 4735 Liberty Rd S, Salem, OR 97302-5036

P: 800/252-6732, 503/588-0121 F: 503/588-8307

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House Committee on Education
Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon, Chair

Dear Chair Alonso Leon and members of the committee:

The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) represents more than 22,000 workers in nearly all levels of public education, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, ESDs and community colleges. OSEA members perform many of the thankless tasks that keep Oregon public schools safe and functional for students, administrators and teachers.

Although most of OSEA's members are K-12 employees, we have significant membership in early learning and higher education and very much see the public education continuum as a single sector. All workers in the sector deserve to have a strong voice not only at their respective local bargaining tables, but in the state institutions that guide funding and policy.

Many Oregonians have a stake in the success of our higher education system and this can make questions of representation in decision-making bodies (e.g., who gets to sit at the table) very contentious. But the changes to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission contained in Senate Bill (SB) 712 should not be contentious. Strengthening the voice for the students that our higher education system exists to serve, and strengthening the voice of the faculty and non-faculty staff who most directly engage with and support those students, is a meaningful improvement for the system as a whole.

One thing that we know from long experience is that the better represented key voices are in high-level decision-making, the better the adoption and execution of those decisions will go. Meaningful participation – full, voting participation – is key to both strong, collaborative decision-making, as well as effective implementation.

OSEA strongly supports SB 712 and other efforts to bring stronger employee voice to higher education in Oregon.

Thank you for your attention,

Bob Estabrook
Government Relations Specialist
bobe@osea.org