

Good afternoon, Chair Holvey and committee members, for the record, my name is Sara Starlin and I am a speech language pathologist at a Title 1 school in Springfield.

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. Our jobs are constantly changing because the needs of our students are constantly changing.

We know that not all students who we work with require the same amount of support and instruction. For example, a student working to correctly produce /r/ doesn't require the same service time as a student in Life Skills who uses a communication device. Because of this, our national licensing association, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, supports the use of a workload model verse relying on simply the number of students that we see.

Fortunately in Springfield, our administrators were open to letting us try a weighted workload model and moving away from traditional caseload totals. This model has benefited students greatly! It allows us to appropriately allocate staffing based on the needs of the students, account for the increased support that Title 1 schools need, and gives us a way to monitor staffing needs and adjust throughout the school year.

Springfield has been using a weighted workload model for over 5 years. In that time, we haven't increased our staffing but we've been able to be more effective in how our staffing is allocated. We're also able to explain why buildings have the staffing ratio that they do. Staffing is not arbitrary or a mystery. We have been able to create a system that meets the unique needs of our district, our team and our students. The end result is that our students have higher quality instruction, our SLPs are able to work more collaboratively with teachers, and we are able to recruit & retain highly skilled 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 students. Thank you for your time.