

COURTNEY NERON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 26



Testimony in Support of SB 1521

February 2, 2022

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

I want to begin my testimony in support of SB1521 by thanking all educators and acknowledging that, while the entire education workforce needs our support, my comments today are focused on just one portion today: school superintendents. School district leaders across the state have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to provide welcoming and safe learning environments, often tasked with solving unprecedented challenges, navigating changing guidelines, and building community despite intense disagreements.

Superintendents are in a simultaneously critical and vulnerable leadership role and we know that strong and stable school district leadership stabilizes our classrooms and learning outcomes. SB 1521 would provide reasonable employment protections for our school superintendents. From COVID safety protocols to equity initiatives and more, tensions between board members and superintendents have led to superintendents being suddenly fired for “no cause” thereby destabilizing entire districts. A superintendent should not be fired for upholding state laws or mandates.

As Craig Hawkins, Executive Director of The Coalition of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) said in a recent [OPB interview](#), “it’s hard to imagine that we’re going to be in a world together where following the law is seen as a fireable offense.” SB 1521 ensures protections when implementing state and federal policies and offers structure to a “no cause” contract termination.

A [recent study](#) by COSA revealed declining rates of female school superintendents and other insights into who is staying in these roles. Job stability and reasonable employment protection are just a few assurances we can give rising education leaders as they consider this important role. Disruptions in leadership have great potential to waste taxpayer dollars. When quality leadership is let go, staff leave as well and it becomes difficult to recruit future district educators and leaders.

I again offer deep appreciation for all who have navigated this difficult terrain and who continue to make the return to in-person learning successful.

I support the district leadership stabilization that this bill can provide and urge passage of SB 1521.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Courtney Neron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

State Representative Courtney Neron