

SB 756 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 4/24, 5/3

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires that school districts provide employees who work with students who have individualized education programs or 504 plans, with access to specified parts of students' education records, to be consulted when education plans are being reviewed or revised. Requires districts to include specified staff in meetings and compensate them for attending. Requires school districts to provide adequate training for employees to safely carry out specialized duties. Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

FISCAL: Fiscal impact issued

REVENUE: No revenue impact

SENATE VOTE: Passed. Ayes, 26; Nays, 3; Excused, 1.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Need for school employees to have more information about students' individualized education programs
- Benefit to students of having more informed staff

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In 2021, legislators convened an interim work group to review issues relating to labor shortages in Oregon schools. According to the Oregon Employment Department (OED), schools compete for workers against a variety of other industries that may provide lower-stress or lower-risk environments. As other industries raise wages, Oregon's schools are finding it difficult to compete. During the summer of 2021, Oregon's school districts reported over 1,820 job vacancies to OED, 85 percent of which required education beyond a high school diploma. Oregon has an overall three-year attrition rate for teachers of approximately 36 percent, with higher rates for teachers of color. The Teacher Standards and Practices Commission reported a total of approximately 66,000 active teaching licenses in its system. However, only about 34,000 teachers were working in Oregon's schools in 2022. In work group meetings, participants discussed pay, teachers spoke about the difficulty of meeting professional development requirements during the current workforce shortage and described the challenges of lost planning time, and both substitute teachers and classified staff reported being charged by districts for training required for their jobs.

Work group participants identified special education as a particularly acute area of need in terms of staffing shortages. Work group participants who work directly with students reported not having access to students' records, not being paid to report prior to school start times, and not having sufficient training. Districts reported difficulties in hiring staff for special education due to low pay and challenging working conditions.

Senate Bill 756 A requires that school district employees who work with students experiencing disability have access to students' records and be provided with sufficient training.