

Good afternoon Chair Neron and members of the House Committee on Education.

My name is Lindsay Ray and I am a high school math teacher currently serving as the president of the Beaverton Education Association. I'm speaking this afternoon in support of HB 2690.

Education is a difficult but rewarding profession, and educators spend years learning and honing their craft. Certified educators are required to have a Masters level education, often incurring tens of thousands of dollars in debt. And yet, the average starting salary for a certified educator in Oregon is \$39,338. I work in the Portland metro area, and in our neck of the woods it's becoming increasingly difficult for educators to live in the communities of the families they serve. Considering the skyrocketing costs of basic needs like food, shelter, gas, etc., an educator just starting out in this profession will no doubt find it challenging to make ends meet.

As a result, we are losing qualified and passionate educators. We are missing opportunities to recruit and retain gifted teachers, counselors, school nurses, speech language pathologists, and more. We are reinforcing barriers to growing a workforce that represents our students and our communities across the state.

We are in a moment in time during which students are coming to schools with a myriad of increasing needs. Staff rise up to the challenge of supporting students in so many creative, thoughtful, and demanding ways every day. Our special educators in particular work to encourage, teach, evaluate, and serve students receiving special education services every day in spite of mountains of paperwork, dysregulated behaviors, and a system that is still catching up to our current reality. These educators are diligently completing an incredibly stressful job day in and day out, serving some of the most vulnerable youth in our communities, and as I mentioned earlier the average starting salary for teachers in Oregon is \$39,338. We are losing qualified and passionate educators.

The burden is even greater on classified staff in Oregon schools. Many classified staff in Beaverton, who keep our schools running, make a few cents above minimum wage. When we are competing with places like Target, Starbucks, and Costco who are paying just as much (if not more) to brand new employees, it's not hard to see why there is a continued long list of vacancies. Our educators deserve better. Our students deserve better.

Working in education is hard, but it is meaningful. Educators have an impact on the lives of potentially hundreds of students each year and thousands of students over a career. But we all know that passion doesn't pay the bills. I encourage you to support HB 2690 to ensure educators in Oregon are paid fairly.