

2/14/23

Senate Committee on Education

Chair Sen. Michael Dembrow

RE SB 283-3

Chair Dembrow and members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Mary Marshall. As the OSEA Corvallis Chapter President, I am testifying on behalf of OSEA I support of the Dash 3 amendments to SB283. I live in Corvallis, OR.

On Just Cause, in my mind it is just cause it should be...

Retention and recruitment are issues in all our Districts and on the importance of keeping our Educational Assistants who work with our Special Education students I feel we in Corvallis may be a bit ahead of the curve. About five years ago, we realized that the Corvallis' Education Assistants (EA), who work in our Lifeskills program and serve our students with the most challenging special needs, were not receiving all the needed student trainings and information needed to support our ultimate goal, a quality education for all Oregon's students. These EAs are saints in my book, and they care deeply for their students. In working with our school district, these EAs now receive around 18% more than our EAs in gen ed. Additionally, our EAs who are in the general education work yet also work with students who pose extra challenges, (like toileting, behavioral or safety concerns concerns), are also paid the higher rate for the time they spend with these students. This has helped retain many of our classified employees in these areas but, given the pay rate still puts them at the \$20-\$30, 000 per year, there is still room for improvement.

One of the areas of improvement is training and inclusion in meetings and information sharing, which is vital and needed to successfully work with the students. We have contract language now giving us access to key instructional information like Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and safety plans. Also, we have the ability to ask for additional trainings as needed. Is it perfect? No, but at least we are recognizing what need to be accomplished to make a consistent and safe work environment for all our students and classified workers.

Corvallis is where I live and work, has a pretty high cost of living. Even with the progress we have made at the bargaining table with our wages and benefits, many of our classified employees live outside of our city. Knowing this, we have worked to make sure they work 6-8 hours a day, as much of that time not split, and with it we are able to offer affordable insurance

for them and their families. I feel our employees can focus on working with our students if they do not have to worry providing the basics for themselves and their families.

Even with all this we are having trouble recruiting EAs and other workers, as we still cannot compete with the outside workforce. You can make a similar wage in retail or food service with less injury. Our District is trying to have as much help in our classrooms especially to work with our Special Education students to meet their needs., The difficulty is finding people who have the temperament, training and commitment that these positions require, and additional licenses and /or college degrees. It is hard to compete with the private sector. I can understand what other Districts who do not have what we are implementing in Corvallis.

Statewide, professional educators, including classified employees, are going through a lot. SB 283-3 identifies the kind of state support, assistance, and guidance that will help our students and employees to make a huge difference – together.

Sincerely,

Mary Marshall

OSEA Corvallis Chapter President