

3/13/23

Senate Committee on Rules
Chair Senator Julie Fahey

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2708

As a member of the Oregon School Employees Association, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2708.

My name is Patricia Rodrigues, and I am an employee who plays an important role in the functioning of the school. I have been the principal's secretary for over eight years and have seen many changes – some have made supporting quality education better and some have created additional challenges for professional educators.

It is a source of great pride for me to work as a team with a large number of my colleagues in maintaining safety, nourishment, education and medical aid for the students in our school district.

During the entirety of the pandemic, classified staff members showed up to assist students in a variety of different ways. For example, they delivered food to families that were going through financial difficulties and distributed devices to help students connect to their new way of schooling. The library media assistant and bus drivers conspired on a brilliant plan to go into the communities together to distribute books directly to the children. To facilitate the preparation and distribution of lunches, our nutrition service staff also planned with bus drivers going into the communities when they typically work off hours.

It was encouraging for me to see students attending public schools begin to place higher importance on people like us, the classified essential employees. For many of my Classified colleagues, we still feel unseen. We help with any given need to support and work directly with students, and we try to fill in the gaps for academic support. Classified staff are more accessible to students and families, and we listen to parent's concerns. In many cases, this is because we are residents of the community and have a first-hand understanding of the challenges that families face.

Throughout the course of the school day, the front office serves as the central location for all communication and activities that take place. It also ensures that all the necessary components are connected and extend a warm welcome to members of the staff, visitors to the school and community members. This is who we are. We have specific classifications. We play an indispensable role. We are here to serve your children.

Sincerely,
Patricia Rodrigues
Member, Oregon School Employees Association