

March 16, 2023

Senate Committee on Rules Senator Kate Lieber, Chair

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2708

Chair Lieber and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

As a member of OSEA, I write this to tell you about myself and my Classified job as an elementary school librarian in GP (I always say it's the best job in the school).

Like so many of you, I chose this job because I thought I could make a difference, I believe in Public Service and I thank you for yours.

I am the daughter of educators and activists who was raised at the altar of critical thinking, public education, and service to others. My father, a high school history teacher, was raised and schooled by Lasalle Christian Brothers, my mother taught elementary school for over 30 years. I never got a straight answer to a question and my education was radical and eclectic. I attended some of the wealthiest schools in the nation and some of the poorest. I graduated from college when I could pay for my tuition with my work-study job. I am privileged, passionate and determined.

Librarians these days are often accused of having an agenda. Yep, I readily admit that I do. I want the students that I teach to know about people who put their lives on the line to do what is good and right. I also want them to understand why it is important to do good, while connecting with members of their community in a healthy conversation to learn about other perspectives, and to change hearts and minds. I want my students to find people and places that they only have access to in books, especially in small, demographically homogenous towns. I want Oregon's future leaders to discover that they are not alone, I want to give them mirrors and mentors and motivation. I want them to know in their bones that sharing doesn't mean losing anything, we all do better when we all do better.

I walked into that library 17 years ago and knew that I was meant to be there. I work a 30 hour week, ½ hour per day less, which is less than the 32 hours that would provide me with full health benefits for myself and my family. I spend most of my paycheck on insurance and what is left would not pay for my living expenses. I am privileged to own a small business that supplements my income so that we can get by at a time when that is challenging for nearly all of us. I am able to supplement my school library budget (\$300/year!) with hundreds of dollars of my own money. I have the luxury to volunteer in my community, to serve on local and state boards and foundations, to advocate for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth, to facilitate a Restorative Justice program for youth in the Juvenile Justice system, and to advise the Native American Student

Unions in my district. I can advocate for my unhoused neighbors and students and open a shelter. I can attend School Board and city council meetings. I can write letters to the editor and testify before my elected officials. I can speak out with little fear, for if I lost my job I would still be okay.

This is not so for most of my Classified colleagues, some of whom work fewer hours than I. Many of whom also work second and third jobs to support their families. They are the true heroes of my story. They are the ones who don Kevlar sleeves to work in some classrooms, they are the ones who look out for the students who have slept in their cars, come to school without breakfast, who need their clothes washed, or a jacket or a new pair of shoes, that box of food for the weekend, or a chance to sit down and talk with an adult who just want to listen with love and without judgement. They are the single mothers who do all that for our kids and then go get their own box of food for their own kids. People know what their jobs are but do we really know all that classified employees do? Do we really understand that we could not have public schools without them?

Your simple vote to support HB 2708 to codify Classified Employees Week as the first week in March says that you really see us, you appreciate us, you will look out for us and fight for us because we fight for our youth every day in every way.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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