

Submitter: Katherine Lee
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: HB2618

I fully support this crucial first step in determining appropriate workload size for SLPs, OTs, and PTs in Oregon Schools. I am a speech pathologist in a large school district in the Portland area, and have seen and experienced firsthand how large workload sizes impact quality of service and student outcomes. SLPs in my district routinely have caseload sizes of 70-80 students, and some even have over 100. I am personally responsible for meeting with over 80 students per week, many of them multiple times per week, and designing and implementing individualized treatment for each one of them. This also comes with paperwork and parent meetings for each student, not to mention all the additional students who I evaluate and conduct parent meetings for who don't end up qualifying for services. High workloads not only impact the clinicians and lead to burnout, but they greatly impact the students who need these services. It means less time for the clinician to design quality treatment that specifically targets the students' goals and it means larger and larger therapy groups. The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) states that "students on smaller caseloads are more likely to make measurable progress on functional communication measures than those on large caseloads." Because of extremely high workloads, students with speech-language needs in Oregon are staying in special education far longer than they should be, increasing the cost to the state, and decreasing the students' opportunity to participate in general education as much as they could and should. School-based SLPs, OTs, and PTs get into this line of work and choose to work in schools because we want to help kids. With workload sizes the way they are, so many of us feel that we are not able to provide the quality of service to our students that we are capable of and that they deserve. If something is not done soon, more and more health professionals will leave the schools for other settings and Oregon's students will suffer even more for it.