

May 3, 2023

Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Sen. Elizabeth Steiner  
Rep. Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and Honorable Committee Members:

Hello, my name is Justin Dowell, and I am proud to be a member of the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA). As a lead secretary at a local school, I understand the importance of the education system's workforce and the role it plays in supporting students' success.

OSEA represents over 23,000 workers across a wide range of public education levels, from Head Start programs to K-12 school districts, ESDs, community colleges, and special districts. Our members are responsible for many essential tasks that keep Oregon's public schools safe and functional for students, teachers, and administrators.

As the most diverse sector of public education, we at OSEA reflect our student body's diversity and share their values and struggles. In a typical elementary school day, classified public education staff outnumber licensed staff by a ratio of seven to one. Our members range from bus drivers, education assistants, cafeteria workers, coaches, and library specialists to interpreters, before- and after-school caregivers, custodial, and grounds staff.

We are grateful for the Co-Chairs of Ways and Means' recommendation of a \$9.9 billion budget for K-12 during these economically challenging times. Still, the state directs us to do the work assessed at \$10.3 billion, and we need to do more for Oregon's students to support their social, emotional, behavioral, physical and academic health.

As classified employees, we are committed to helping our students every day. We care about our students' safety, success and Oregon's future. To achieve these goals together, we need a \$10.3 billion appropriation for the State School Fund (SSF) this session and meaningful investments in the education workforce. These investments must include higher quality jobs that have Just Cause in the employment agreement, funding for recruitment and retention of classified employees to have a five-hour minimum workday or at least a 20% SPED differential, funding for the currently required de-escalation training and incident reports for classified staff who support special education students, and funding for culturally appropriate early childhood literacy.

Investing in public education means investing in the education workforce. We need to increase the quality of classified jobs to retain our skilled workforce and recruit more individuals to help. Oregon's education system requires consistent investments and support for housing and behavioral health to support students and their families mutually.

Education is a priority that requires consistent investments in addition to support for housing and behavioral health because these issues intersect and, if funded in concert, will mutually support Oregon's students and their families. Combined with the additional investments by this committee

in our education workforce, these core budget elements will help ensure that we can really lift Oregon's students and families.

I know that this is a challenging time in Oregon's history. But I stand with you to do the very best for all of Oregon's students. Together, we support a lifetime of learning that will give all of Oregon a brighter future.

Thank you for your consideration and attention,

Justin Dowell  
Gresham

Cc. Sen. Lew Frederick, Subcommittee on Education, Co-chair  
Cc. Rep. Susan McLain, Subcommittee on Education, Co-chair