



Oregon School Employees Association

www.osea.org

State Office: 4735 Liberty Road S, Salem, OR 97302-5036

P: 800-252-6732, 503-588-0121 F: 503-588-8307

May 10, 2023

House Committee on Education
Representative Courtney Neron, Chair

RE: SB 489 – Support

Chair Neron and Members of the House Committee on Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to convey our strong support for SB 489.

The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) members support special education students in all Oregon counties and in nearly all levels of Oregon public education, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, education service districts, and community colleges. OSEA members perform many of the essential tasks that keep Oregon public schools safe and functional for students, administrators and teachers.

OSEA is pleased to have partnered with the Legislature in recent sessions to exempt certain classifications of workers from the complicated “reasonable assurance test” that denies economically fragile classified employees unemployment insurance (UI) benefits in the summer. It’s unrealistic to think that we will be able to retain classified staff to stay in positions who make roughly \$30,000 annually to wait while their school district process confirms “reasonable assurance.” Once the school district process completes, they then hand off to the State of Oregon Employment Department which then processes the request further to only then give a “green light” to the workers who may then actively seek additional work.

Oregon has a housing crisis. Affordable housing is hard to find and keep and, once lost, it is difficult to regain – especially for working families who live paycheck to paycheck. Senate Bill (SB) 489 addresses a core component to the intersectional issues of food insecurity and economic fragility for our members who represent the most diverse component of the K-12 workforce. We now know that retention of housing is key. Rent still needs to be paid while the process continues. Bills still need to be paid on time to protect credit ratings. And no one should go hungry in a state with a long legacy of farm harvest and fertile land.

Oregon needs to retain their classified staff. We are the backbone of a quality education. We are the first in and the last out of the buildings each day. We have some of the hardest jobs at the lowest pay. And recruitment is a very expensive component in our K-12 business model. There have been a lot of discussions regarding how best to retain our classified work force. Senate Bill (SB) 489 is a loadbearing component to increasing the quality of these jobs. Access to UI gives more stability to our members, many who are caregiving one or more generations.

*The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) is an affiliate of
the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the AFL-CIO.*





Oregon School Employees Association

www.osea.org

State Office: 4735 Liberty Road S, Salem, OR 97302-5036

P: 800-252-6732, 503-588-0121 F: 503-588-8307

I would direct your attention to the graphic we've enclosed with this testimony showing the extra barrier – the extra journey – that school employees are asked to do just to qualify for the small benefit amounts that their inadequate wages should qualify them for.

Senate Bill (SB) 489 eliminates the waste of extra process and time for economically fragile education workers. If passed, Senate Bill (SB) 489 also simplifies the process for employers and saves time and effort for the Oregon Employment Department (OED). We understand from review by OED that Oregon is within its authority under federal law to eliminate the reasonable assurance test. It also will not present a significant cost to school districts, because many school employees, even without this extra barrier in their way, will only file for UI benefits unless they really need them.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Susan Allen
OSEA Government Relations Specialist

