



Office of the Senate President

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Hudson and Wright, and Members of the Committee

For the record, my name is Rob Wagner, State Senator for Senate District 19 which encompasses Lake Oswego, West Linn, Tualatin, SW Portland, Rivergrove, and Durham.

I am writing to add my support for SB 489.

In 2019, when I chaired Senate Education, we passed HB 2660 which extended unemployment insurance to janitorial and maintenance staff of public and nonprofit schools during school breaks and summer vacation. This bill was a great step forward toward breaking down barriers that school employees face to receiving unemployment benefits. This session, I was pleased to see SB 489 introduced. This bill will take HB 2660 (2019) a step further to provide equal access to UI benefits to all school employees.

Colleagues, we know that our classified staff are the reason that our public schools run smoothly day in and day out. They are often the most diverse members of our K12 school employees, often are paid the least and are always working hard to support Oregon students. Unfortunately, each summer break, these employees must complete a reasonable assurance test, which frequently results in their denial of UI benefits, leaving them without pay or benefits for the entire summer break.

Workforce retention and recruitment is a major problem across our economy with workers citing low pay, lack of benefits, and expensive of childcare as reasons they are struggling to find and stay at their jobs. Our schools cannot afford to lose our classified staff. And although we rely so heavily on them and praise them as heroes, we are not following through with living wages and benefits. SB 489 is just one step toward supporting these critical workers.

Colleagues, I urge you aye vote.

Sincerely,

Oregon Senate President Rob Wagner
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