



North Santiam School District 29J

Serving Lyons, Mehama, Stayton, and Sublimity
"We Change Kids' Lives"

June 2, 2025

Dear Representative Diehl:

Thank you for your support of our North Santiam School District schools, educators, and students this legislative session. I know it has been even more difficult this year with declining state revenues and federal budget uncertainties. We so appreciate your work!

I am writing today to urge you to oppose SB 916. While our district is grateful for the prioritization of K-12 funding by the Legislature, passage of this particular bill will likely create serious financial strain and add a confusing administrative burden for school districts all across Oregon. **We must ensure that every dollar our district receives improves outcomes and directly benefits our students.**

Just like the Legislature, we have had to make hard budget choices with the resources available to us. We had to reduce over \$800,000 in employees and services to students for the 2025-26 school year. There is also the added uncertainty about reductions to federal education funding and their impact on our most vulnerable students. We cannot risk additional budget uncertainty or divert limited state resources away from our classrooms.

Before casting your vote on SB 916, I respectfully ask you to consider the following:

- **SB 916 will create new financial pressures on districts:** School districts pay unemployment benefits on a dollar-for-dollar basis. While we appreciate the efforts to make the bill "cost neutral" for districts, the byzantine rules of unemployment insurance raise serious implementation concerns, and it may be months, or longer, before districts recover financially. In the meantime, those dollars can no longer be used for their original intent - providing educational services and support to our students.
- **SB 916 will raise the stakes and create imbalance during collective bargaining:** While a few other states have passed similar legislation, their public employees are not legally allowed to strike. SB 916 introduces additional uncertainty into challenging contract negotiations, and the threat of a strike will force districts to agree to contracts they can't afford, to avoid the negative impacts on students.
- **Oregon has experienced record-long teacher strikes without SB 916 – more are likely if it passes:** Our teachers and educators deserve to be fairly compensated for the work they do supporting our students. But with rising costs and looming federal cuts, school districts are facing challenging budget realities. SB 916 lessens the urgency to sit together at the bargaining table and do the hard work to reach a compromise that centers the needs of our students.

At a time when districts across Oregon are facing difficult budget environments, the last thing we need is more fiscal uncertainty in our collective bargaining and budget processes. I believe passage of SB 916



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would seriously impact our ability to serve our students this coming year, as we are currently in negotiations with our Licensed Employee Union.

Please vote "No" on SB 916 and preserve our ability to focus on serving students. Ed, please reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lee W. Loving
Superintendent
North Santiam School District 29J