



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

January 23, 2025

Senate Committee on Labor and Business

Dear Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham and Members of the Committee:

My name is Iris Hodge, and I am the Director of Government Relations and Communications for the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA). We represent 25,000 workers in nearly all levels of public education, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, ESDs, community colleges and special districts. OSEA members perform many of the under recognized, yet vital tasks that keep Oregon public schools safe and functional for students, administrators and teachers.

Our members know firsthand what school district budget constraints are doing to students and their peers. Classified staff support certified teachers, run the school offices, fill in for school nurses to perform basic medical care, they lead afterschool programs and keep students safe during recess duty. When there are not enough licensed professionals, classified educational staff must be all things to the students who rely on them. With larger class sizes, students with greater needs and educators continually expected to do more with less, we are seeing significant rates of burnout and turnover.

SB 849 offers a potential opportunity to address some of these challenges by enabling the PERS board to apply School District Unfunded Liability Fund resources directly to districts that are most in need. Current statutory requirements make it impossible for districts to access these funds effectively. SB 849 would remove these restrictions and give the PERS board the flexibility to allocate funds where they are needed most. This change could help the urgent need of retaining the educational staff that are critical to our students' success and well-being.

OSEA will continue working closely with the PERS board and the State Legislature to find responsible, long-term solutions to our schools' budgetary constraints while honoring our commitment to our educators and with that, we respectfully urge you to support SB 849.

Iris Hodge
Director, Government Relations and Communications
Oregon School Employees Association

