

Submitter: Holly Johnsen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2900

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chair McIntire, Rep. Dobson, and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to express my support for the proposal to reduce the educator probationary period. I'm a school counselor who is in her 4th year so I have just left the current probationary period and I believe a reduced probation will improve retention, support professional growth, and ultimately benefit our students. By reducing the probationary period, educators will have the protections that come with a contract sooner, helping them stay in the communities they serve and build stronger connections with students, families, and colleagues.

Currently, the probationary period for teachers in Oregon is longer than that of other professions that require similar levels of education. Many other professions with comparable training and education, such as healthcare and law, have probationary periods of 6 months to a year. By reducing the probationary period for teachers, we can align our expectations with those in other fields and create a more fair and efficient process.

This bill also includes an important safeguard for administrators by allowing them to extend the probationary period by 60 days if needed, mirroring practices in Washington state. This gives schools the flexibility to ensure an educator is the right fit while still providing teachers with the support they need to succeed in their role.

I'm a school counselor in PPS so I was still in my probationary period during our strike in 2023, but I was passionate about labor organizing and fighting against private interests in our schools. I took the initiative to lead my school as a strike captain and I helped organize all my colleagues into roles and responsibilities for our picket line. I spoke out publicly multiple times about the issues we were striking for, and supported other teams at other schools. I was quite aware that I was still probationary and while it may not be the intention, in effect, educators feel that we're more vulnerable to retaliation during this period. While this only gave me pause, I know others who were more hesitant to speak out or be involved in our organizing because they were probationary. Even this year, I have heard people's hesitation to "rock the boat" when still in their probationary period and when they say "rock the boat" what we're referring to is simply talking with their coworkers about their shared challenges and communicating those issues to management. In my experience the prolonged probationary period decreases educators' authentic engagement in our union which is ultimately working towards better working conditions for our staff and

students.

In closing, reducing the probationary period for educators will ensure that qualified and committed educators stay in our schools, strengthen their ties to the communities they serve, and make a positive impact on students. I urge you to support this bill for the benefit of teachers, students, and Oregon's education system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

In Solidarity,

Holly Johnsen
Portland Public Schools
School Counselor