



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

Oregon Education Association (OEA), which represents over 41,000 educators and education service professionals across the state, spanning pre-K through our community colleges. Our members include teachers, bus drivers, custodians, teacher assistants, nutrition specialists, community college faculty and staff across the state. OEA strongly supports HB 2900 because it provides critical protections for educators while ensuring fairness and accountability in our schools.

At the core of this bill is the principle of just cause, a fundamental standard in employment fairness. Just cause establishes a clear and consistent framework for decision-making, ensuring that employment actions—such as discipline or dismissal—are based on fair and objective criteria.

Just cause relies on the following seven principles to ensure fairness:

1. **Notice:** Were the rules and expectations clear and communicated to the employee?
2. **Reasonable Rules and Orders:** Are the rules reasonable and related to the employee's job performance?
3. **Investigation:** Was a thorough and fair investigation conducted before taking action?
4. **Fair Investigation:** Was the investigation unbiased and completed with all relevant facts?
5. **Proof:** Is there substantial evidence that the employee violated a rule or expectation?
6. **Equal Treatment:** Was the decision consistent with how similar situations have been handled?
7. **Appropriate Discipline:** Is the action proportionate to the infraction or performance concern?

These principles allow for accountability and support administrators in addressing concerns, but they also protect employees from arbitrary or unfair treatment.

It's important to note that just cause protections do not prevent administrators from taking necessary steps to address performance issues. Under this framework, educators can receive mentorship, plans of assistance, and other supports to grow in their practice. However, just cause ensures that decisions are grounded in fairness and that educators are not left vulnerable to arbitrary dismissal.

The current three-year probationary period creates significant instability for teachers. Without just cause protections, teachers often feel they are working under a cloud of fear, particularly when advocating for better wages, improved working conditions, or classroom supports for their

students. This fear can silence educators and hinder their ability to advocate effectively for the needs of their classrooms.

Additionally, the probationary system disproportionately impacts teachers who move due to life changes or circumstances beyond their control. Starting the three-year probation period over again not only disrupts their careers but also weakens their connection to the communities they serve. By reducing the probationary period and implementing just cause protections earlier, HB 2900 helps ensure that teachers can remain rooted in their communities with the stability and protections that come with a contract.

HB 2900 is a crucial step toward keeping experienced teachers in the profession and ensuring that they are treated with fairness and respect. It strikes a balance between providing protections for educators and maintaining the tools administrators need to support and discipline staff.

The Oregon Education Association urges your support for HB 2900.