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Dear Chair Frederick and members of the committee,

I am writing on behalf of SEIU 503 in opposition to SB 310. SEIU 503 represents over 4,700 workers at Oregon's seven higher education institutions and over 500 workers in custodial and nutrition services work at Portland Public Schools, we are committed to ensuring our members get fair and sustainable contracts to work at and operate universities and schools.

We are concerned that SB 310 would undermine the bargaining and striking rights of university and school employees by allowing only one party to petition the board for fact-finding. This bill risks diminishing the voices of workers who have fought long and hard for protections in the workplace.

The collective bargaining process exists to ensure that both sides—employers and employees—have an equal opportunity to advocate for their interests. Fact-finding can be a useful tool that allows both parties to present evidence regarding their positions and to seek recommendations, but this process is one that must be mutually agreed to in order for it to be beneficial in resolving labor disputes.

The Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA) already has a mandatory 150-calendar-day period for the parties to engage in good faith negotiations before mediation and requires at least fifteen days of mediation before either party can declare impasse. The PECBA requires the parties to exchange information relevant to the bargaining process throughout bargaining and mediation also serves to facilitate information-sharing and resolution of the dispute. If a party can force the other into fact-finding when the parties do not mutually agree it would be beneficial, this could be used as a tactic to stall and delay, damaging labor relations at a time it is most critical to resolve the dispute.

A successful and productive bargaining process is one that encourages dialogue and cooperation throughout bargaining. If we allow one party to start the fact-finding process, we are sending a message that workers have little recourse to protect their rights, and that their voices do not matter. This would further erode trust in the negotiation process and in our educational institutions.

SB 310 would undermine the process of collective bargaining for educational employees.

I urge you to reject Senate Bill 310. The current process is crucial for ensuring fairness, equity, and the continued success of our education system. Thank you for your time and consideration.



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Sincerely,
Elsie Elling

Political and Policy Strategist

SEIU 503