

Submitter: Charla Wanta

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3652

I am a parent of students in Portland Public Schools, the child of a public school educator, a former middle school teacher, and a current substitute teacher. The gold-quality, randomized study on class size (Tennessee STAR) shows that small class sizes do improve student outcomes.

Sometimes when I hear that funding smaller class sizes is too expensive, I think of all the things the Tennessee STAR study did not even address. Did teachers with smaller class loads stay longer in their careers (and thus provide many more years of excellent teaching) because they did not burn out? Over years of smaller class sizes and greater capacity to differentiate, did teachers modify their methods to include more dynamic and personalized teaching strategies that simply are not feasible in lecture-only sized crowds? Did fewer students require (expensive!) special education funding because they received the one-on-one attention they needed from their classroom teachers? Did more students stay out of the juvenile justice system/go to college because they were able to build meaningful relationships with their educators?

I believe sometimes it is easy, as the one creating the budget and not in a classroom every day, to champion the good over the essential. Apps, curriculum, instructional coaches, extracurricular activities, and sports facilities are all wonderful and I, as a parent, dream of a district where we fund it all. However, optimizing the classroom environment is essential and the most important part of a child's day at school. Period. Classroom teachers must always must come first in the budget.

In the long run, it is expensive \*not\* to fund small class sizes --- and it should be a central part of any bargaining and contract negotiations.