

Submitter: Gillian Schmidt  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3652

My name is Gillian Schmidt. I am an Instructional Coach at Vernon K-8 in Portland Public Schools and a parent of a 5th and 2nd grader at Alameda Elementary in PPS. I have been in education for 25 years and writing today in strong support of HB 3652. Before returning to work in my home district in 2019, I spent 17 years teaching in Evergreen Public Schools in Vancouver. In Washington we were able to bargain for class size and it made huge difference in instruction and learning. While class sizes were not always small, I taught 8th grade and we could have up to 33 students. They were smaller at the early grades (WA passed legislation to keep K-3 class sizes under 20) and we always knew there was a limit. This helped with staff morale and enabled us to stay focused on our instruction. Currently at my school school which serves a significant number of historically disadvantage students we are projected to have 36 students in our 7th and 8th grade classes and 32 in our 5th and 6th grade classes. This is too many students. At PPS we went on strike last year with class sizes as one of our top priorities and yet we have made little progress. Please support this bill allowing us to bargain for class size.

Here is what I see in my role as an Instructional Coach. When teachers have large class sizes they struggle to do the time consuming work of planning for the students who need the most support. Even if it is a small number of students, maybe 5-8 in a class, this is work they get to after planning their main lesson and looking closely at the work of all their students. Often it doesn't happen. When classes are large and students come with high social and emotional needs, it is difficult to attend to both the social and emotional needs of all the students and simultaneously conduct small groups to work with students who need extra support. In order to support teachers with this work, I need to meet with them during their planning time. When their classes are large they are so busy they struggle to find the time to meet with me making it hard for me to support them. We have many old buildings in Portland that are not big enough to support large classes. Students are crammed in when they need space and crammed in students who need a break have nowhere to go. So they go out into the hallways seeking the quiet they need to process their learning and social challenges. Teacher burn out is high - sane working conditions provide the essential climate for strong teaching and learning.

As a teacher when I had 24 students in a class we would generally have 6 tables. Having an opportunity to participate in class discussion using academic language is key for students gaining the skills they need to meet the grade level standards. With 6 tables we would get to 4, take a deep breath and have time for the final 2 tables to share. When I had 32 students, 4 tables was only half way through. We often stop

there for the day and give the other students a chance the next day. Over time, this cuts the opportunities for students to share their thinking in half. This can't be what you want for Oregon students.

Families are leaving our public schools for private schools where class size is limited. I grew up in Oregon and graduated from Portland Public Schools. I was proud of my public school education. This is a strong legacy in Oregon that is being eroded with each year that we don't address this problem. Parents who supported our strike last year feel betrayed by the school district and state legislature because they were supporting our request for smaller class sizes. Now those families are giving up on us and leaving.

Please do your part to bring back the pride in Oregon public schools by allowing us to bargain for class size and vote YES on HB 3652!

Sincerely,  
Gillian Schmidt  
PPS Teacher and Parent