

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

My name is Erin Kellenberger , and I am Special education teacher at Beaverton . I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 3652, which would make class size and caseloads a mandatory subject of collective bargaining in all Oregon schools.

I have been a special education teacher for 8 years. Over the years the caseload has fluctuated. I will NEVER forget my 6th year which was shortly after coming back from Covid. I, at one point had 43 students on my caseload. You heard that correctly 43. Though in the districts eyes because I wasn't fully supporting those 43 students (13 open evaluations didn't count in their eyes) no additional support was given to me. This is the year that nearly broke me as an educator. The year I nearly said "I can no longer do this" I had 13, 5th graders who had needs far greater than most in a resource setting. I often missed my plan minutes, lunch time to support their growing needs. Did I complain, yes did change ever happen? No.

Over the last two years I've been blessed to be a lead teacher in a self contained classroom. Self contained classrooms typically have small student To high staff ratio. This year I have 14 very impacted students in my classroom. (The same number as some kindergarten classrooms at my school). 14 Students that have very diverse needs again which makes the day challenging and sometimes their needs cannot be met due to the increased physical behaviors or medical needs other students. While I am blessed to have a team of incredible paras, it's still difficult to meet the students growing and diverse needs. I absolutely love what I do and truly know I am making a difference however we need to make a change in caseload sizes/caps in order to avoid burnout. It's not fair to us or our students. These high caseload numbers in any classroom let alone as a special education teacher should never happen. It's nearly impossible to meet the growing needs of our students when having large caseloads with endless IEP paperwork on top of that. We put so much time and effort into our jobs it often feels unmanageable and unsustainable. I now understand why they say special education teachers burnout after 5 years. Let's make a change to avoid losing a lot of very talented teachers and the assistants that help run these classrooms.

4-educator burnout is real. As stated above I nearly broke after year 6 and having a caseload of 43. The IEP paperwork was endless (often done outside of work hours), plan time was often missed due to supporting these needs of our most impacted students. Educators should not have to do work outside their contracted hours but with large caseloads and classes it's impossible to make that happen.

Please hear out the educators that are on the frontlines experiencing what it is actually like. Our jobs are far from easy. We're just asking to make it more manageable and sustainable to avoid burnout.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Kellenberger
Beaverton