

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

My name is Justin, and I am middle school special education teacher at North Marion. 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.

Please follow through with me to the end. I promise there is a point to this but there is explanation that needs to happen. The average person has no idea what goes into developing an IEP. First we have to set up a meeting with a time that works for a parent/guardian, then get a specialist's schedule that works for the time the parent/guardian can make the meeting (if the child sees a specialist and then think about if they have multiple specialist!), then try to find a district representative for the meeting, and then find a teacher(s) willing to attend an IEP meeting. Then we have to write up the IEP which can take a few hours (if you do it well) that encompasses the child's strengths, preferences, interests, most current data and using that to develop new goals, and tracking down teacher input. We then have to track down the state test scores from last year and ELPA scores if they are an ELL student. Then we go through the accommodations/modification depending on the student to be successful at school. After all that we hold a meeting ranging from 40-90 minutes depending upon the type of meeting and/or severity of disability. Then I have to work on getting everything finalized since this is a legally binding document. This doesn't even include if we have to do a three year re-evaluation which requires extra assessments depending upon the eligibilities and a meeting earlier on to get consent for an evaluation with the parent. Now compound this with every student we serve. One year, I had nearly 38 on my caseload as a resource teacher. The cap should be somewhere in the vicinity of 25. Not only do I hold these meetings and write up each IEP, but I actually teach! When a caseloads get too excessive: it has an enormous impact on the quality of lessons and feedback for each student. Do I neglect my legal responsibility which could bring a lawsuit to a school or come up with a worksheet instead of doing something engaging? That's the reality.

This bill must help to ensure support for our case managers to be the best teachers they can be instead of getting burned out with an excessive caseload. With a shortfall of special education teachers: we are going to lose more and that will only hurt our students who deserve the best!

Thank you so much for your consideration and for reading my testimony. This is an important bill to consider for some of our most vulnerable students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Justin  
North Marion