

Submitter: Alice Eberharter  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3652

Dear Oregon Legislators,

My name is Alice Eberharter. I am an elementary school Speech-Language Pathologist in David Douglas School District in SE Portland. I work with students who have Speech or Language Impairments, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Health Impairments like ADHD, Down Syndrome, and seizure disorders. This is my 10th year in this job. Even though I love working with kids and find speech therapy fascinating, I have considered leaving many times because of the stress of my job.

I currently serve 53 students who are on Individual Education Plans, being evaluated for special education, or receive informal intervention with me. That is a LOT of kids. I see students in groups of 1-4 depending on their needs and goals, usually between 1-3 times per week. I currently case manage 27 students, meaning I am responsible for scheduling meetings, coordinating services, and lots and lots of paperwork. Case Management includes coordinating and writing Behavior Support Plans, Health Plans, Safety Plans, connecting with doctors and therapists, collaborating with specialists in my district, and educating teachers and instructional assistants about supports like Assistive Technology. Doing that for 53 kids is A LOT. Consider an elementary classroom; 26 kids is a decent class size. I am serving and supporting TWO classes that size.

Caseload caps would meaningfully impact my work and my students on many fronts:

- I could see my students in smaller groups. Smaller groups mean each student gets more individual time for instruction on their goals.

- I would love to give my students' teachers more consultation support, and spend more time on the "behind the scenes" things my students need that help them in class.

- I would be able to plan ahead more thoroughly to deliver the instruction they deserve. Much of my prep and planning time is taken up by paperwork for the 50+ IEP's I'm writing. That means right now my lesson planning sometimes has to be on the fly.

- I would be able to work less outside my contract, feel less stressed when I get home, and hopefully not wake up at 4:30am thinking about those 3 things I forgot to do at work.

- If I had a smaller caseload, I feel very confident that my students would be getting better, more thorough service from me as their SLP. I wish I could say I'm doing it all already, but as a human being with a finite amount of time and energy, I can't. I can only do my best.

HB 3652 will allow our unions to demand that School Districts bargain over class and caseload sizes. We have a real chance to improve our students' lives and education by winning smaller classes and groups for them through the negotiation process. As a union member and educator, I know that resources are often limited (although funding the Quality Education Model would help with that). Right now, if a union wants to consider taking a smaller raise in order to help pay for the staff that would make smaller classes possible, it's a huge risk. In school districts where class and caseload size are not a mandatory subject of bargaining, the District can say they will "do their best" without offering any meaningful guarantees (specifically, class and caseload caps). HB 3652 gives us a chance to have real discussion about priorities and working conditions with our employers.

My working conditions are my students' learning conditions, and I want to improve both. Please vote yes on HB 3652.