



Date: March 5, 2025
To: House Committee on Education
From: Morgan Allen, COASA
Subject: House Bill 3652 - Class Size as a Mandatory Subject of Bargaining

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Morgan Allen and on behalf of the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators and our 3000 members, I am asking you to consider the unintended consequences House Bill 3652 will have on our schools and our students. All of our members would agree that reasonable class sizes with a highly qualified teacher are the best learning environments for our students. But without unlimited resources and learning space, HB 3652 is not the appropriate response to meeting this goal.

This bill takes the focus off what school districts and educators should be most concerned about - ensuring that every student has the tools and resources to succeed. And that means we need to invest more of our limited resources in our students who need the most academic, mental health, and social and emotional supports. One-size fits all class size caps are not a research supported best practice and are one of the most expensive school interventions.

Additionally, Oregon has experienced significant declining enrollment post-COVID and according to new data released in December from the National Center for Education Statistics, Oregon is one of 13 states that have effectively lowered their student-to-teacher ratio over the last five years by more than one student per teacher.

Mandatory Bargaining On Class Size Takes the Focus Off Student Needs & Outcomes

At a time when conversations about student outcomes and accountability are at the forefront, contract language requiring equivalent class sizes across district schools will make it harder for districts to invest resources in students that need them the most.

Many school districts have chosen to invest more resources in their schools with the students who need the most support. Schools with large numbers of emerging bilingual students, students in poverty, or schools with large numbers of students at risk of dropping



out need more resources in order to achieve improved outcomes. School districts should not be put in a position where they are required to bargain in order to keep making the investments necessary for student success.

HB 3652, though well intentioned, will place an undue burden onto some of our most impacted student populations during challenging budget times. And more concerning, it takes the focus off improving outcomes for students who need the most support.

House Bill 3652 Doesn't Address Underlying Issues Like School Funding & Space

As this Committee is aware, we have a \$750 million biennial gap in Special Education Funding that is putting tremendous pressure on our public school budgets. Our school districts and ESDs are not funded at a level that allows us to reduce class sizes without making difficult budget choices. Many districts simply do not have the funding or space to add more teachers and classrooms to accommodate small class sizes.

We do not believe that this bill will have an appreciable effect on the number of students in a classroom. And based on [what we have seen in Portland Public Schools](#), it has the potential to divert resources from the students who need the most support to improve outcomes to pay teachers in wealthier schools class size "overages" - which is inherently inequitable.

Class Size is a Mandatory Subject for Title I Eligible Schools - It's Not Being Used

During the 2021 Legislative Session, SB 580 was passed and made class size and caseload limits at Title I eligible schools a mandatory subject of bargaining effective January 1, 2022. According to data we received from ODE, there are more than 560 schools statewide that are receiving Title I-A funding currently and likely hundreds more that currently meet the eligibility requirements for students in poverty.

The thinking at the time was that there is some research that shows that smaller class sizes can be beneficial for students in poverty that need additional supports. We agreed to this compromise because it brought the focus of class size to our schools and students that need it the most.

What Has Happened in the Three Years Since That Law Went Into Effect?

There have been few requests to bargain class size at a district's Title I schools. When this hearing was posted last week, OASBO surveyed their members and received 88 responses from school districts, ESDs, and charter schools. The results show that the vast majority of respondents have not received a demand to bargain over class size at Title I schools. Here is what we heard back:



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- **Since the law went into effect, have you bargained for class size for Title I schools?**
 - Yes = 28%
 - No = 72%

 - **Has your local teacher's association made any demands to bargain over class size in Title I schools?**
 - Yes = 20%
 - No = 80%

While we have not had time to conduct a full survey of every school district, it is clear that there have been relatively few demands to bargain under the current law. Which leads to a key question for our members, if class size is such a pressing issue, and it is a mandatory subject of bargaining at Title I schools, why aren't teachers demanding to bargain over it?

Making Class Size A Mandatory Subject - Not Just a Conversation

We have heard that adding non-Title I Schools to the list of mandatory subjects of bargaining just ensures that the “conversation” occurs during local contract negotiations. In fact, it significantly raises the stakes and in today's current environment our members believe this will likely lead to more strikes. In short, a mandatory subject of bargaining means that if the district and the teachers and their labor representatives can't come to an agreement, the teachers can now strike over the failure to reach an agreement on hard class size caps, for example.

Expect Dramatic Impacts When the Next Recession Hits

School districts already spend around 85% of their resources on personnel – primarily teachers. The rest is needed to pay for supplies, utilities, busing and other operational expenses. When Oregon's next recession hits, expect to see significant impacts on the school calendar.

If school districts are required to negotiate class size into contracts district-wide, We should anticipate challenges in sustaining class size reductions which create further instability in our education system. You will see school days and programs cut during the next inevitable recession in Oregon.

School district budgets are a zero sum game and when budgets need to be reduced you can really only reduce staff, shorten the school year, or cut programs. When budgets are short and cuts must be made – and there are class size requirements in contracts – that only leaves days and programs to cut, directly impacting our students.



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House Bill 3652 is not the solution to class size issues. Funding and collaboration to maximize limited resources to improve student outcomes is. Class size is already a mandatory subject of bargaining for Title I schools, but is not being utilized. If the bill passes, it will only make local negotiations more contentious. COSA asks you to reject this legislation and bring the focus back to policies that place student outcomes at the forefront.