

Submitter: Venus Reeve

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3652

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

My name is Venus Reeve, and I am a special education teacher in Springfield, Oregon. 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. After the 2008 recession, class sizes ballooned at the small elementary school where I worked. Students as young as five were grouped into classes with 20%-50% more children than the year before, with some classes as high as 35 students to one teacher with no aide support. As the special educator assigned to that school, I was responsible for ensuring that all students with disabilities could access the general education curriculum and their specially designed instruction. This included making sure the learning environment was accessible, however the sheer size of the class prevented some of our students from attending class. The single teacher with thirty children could not provide the time, the attention, and manage the environmental needs that some students with disabilities required to attend instruction. Students who were able to be in classes of 20 or 22 students could no longer attend those classes, now that there were 28-35 other bodies with all the noise and movement that those children added to the learning environment. Sadly, at least one of my students who had been successful in general education classrooms before that year can no longer attend public school. Their progress was halted, and they lost connection to their peers and their education. The classes were so large and teachers had no input to make them more appropriate for ALL students. Had the teachers been able to bargain class size as part of their contract, they could have worked with administration to find other solutions to the budget constraints that would have kept all students' needs in mind. Teachers are the boots on the ground, the experts in the field. They live, eat, breathe the needs of their students, and their expertise and experience MUST be included in bargaining to provide students the protection and the advocacy THEY need to access their public education. I urge you to support HB 3652 to empower educators to ensure ALL students' needs are represented and honored.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Venus Reeve

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Springfield Education Association