

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

My name is Kathy Kuffin here in strong support of HB 3652. I am a very recently retired K-5 Bilingual Reading Specialist who has worked for 27 years in Woodburn, Oregon. I was in the role of Bargaining Chair in 2022-2023, when, under SB 580, we were the first Union local, as a Title 1 District to successfully negotiate class size limits for primary classrooms (K-3) and caseload caps for all SpEd educators as a mandatory subject of collective bargaining. Overcrowded classrooms hurt vulnerable students the most. Students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), and low-income students benefit the most from smaller class sizes and lower student-to-teacher ratios. Prior to our negotiations, it was not unusual to have kindergarten classes with up to 30 students in them!

Under our new contract, if there are over 20 in a Kinder class, the District must work to ensure that multiple supports are put in place. These supports come from a menu of options outlined in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA or Teachers' contract) and available to the educator whose classroom has exceeded the limits. The discussion and selection of the best option by the educator is mediated by a committee of teachers, administrators and Union leaders alongside the teacher. That is the kind of solution that can come from making class size a mandatory subject.

In our first year of implementation, this support for kinder teachers most frequently took the form of adding a full-time instructional assistant. The key was that educators engaged in an interactive process and had agency to choose what options in the CBA worked best for them. In addition, our negotiated agreement piloted weighted caseloads for Speech Language Pathologists that allowed that group of educators to apply a teacher-generated formula chart and work collaboratively to distribute their caseloads equitably among themselves without going over the required caps and without hiring new staff.

Educator burnout is real. Excessive caseloads and large class sizes contribute to high turnover rates which negatively impact student learning. Prior to these negotiations (in 2022/23) our educator attrition rate was 24%. In the 2023/24 school year, with class size limits in grades K-3 and caseload caps, teacher attrition was reduced to 9.3%. The increased workforce stability created by class size and caseload limits is an enormous win for our students who benefit from keeping experienced bilingual teachers in our Dual Language district.

Every school district is different. This bill ensures that class size and caseloads are negotiated and the best fit is found at the bargaining table for students and staff in each district in order to achieve more equitable academic outcomes for students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kathy Kuffin  
Retired Woodburn Educator