



TO: House Committee on Education
FROM: Stacy Michaelson, Director of Government Relations & Communications
DATE: March 5, 2025
RE: HB 3652

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

For the record, I'm Stacy Michaelson with the Oregon School Boards Association, representing Oregon's locally elected education governing bodies. I am here today in opposition to HB 3652.

This bill would add class size to the list of mandatory subjects of bargaining for all schools in Oregon, not just Title I schools as it is now. When something is a mandatory subject of bargaining, it means that a failure to reach agreement between parties can lead to a strike. In contrast, when something is permissive, either party may request to bargain, but a failure to reach agreement on that subject is not grounds for a strike.

In Oregon, in 2021, we passed SB 580 which made class size in Title I schools a mandatory subject of bargaining. The intention behind this focus on Title I schools was to ensure that bargaining over class size be targeted at the schools and students most in need of additional support. This decision was made, in part, on the heels of bargaining in PPS where class size language largely led to increased pay for teachers in affluent schools that exceeded class size targets while the district prioritized smaller classes in Title I schools.

For anyone who hasn't sat at a bargaining table, it is a bit of a dance between the two sides, where a movement in one area of the contract often begets a response in another. For example, if the district cannot agree to a policy proposal from labor, they may, if possible, make more movement on compensation. Alternatively, where a district lacks the funds to meet labor's compensation requests, you are likely to see more permissive language in other aspects of the contract. In school districts, where budgets are limited, most bargaining essentially comes down to a balance of bargaining both compensation and policies within the budget allocated to us by the legislature.

Discussions about class size are inherently linked with cost drivers for districts. In order to make actual reductions to class size, districts would require additional staff--which would come at an increase to the districts' personnel costs. With 85% of district budgets already going to personnel, this could lead to cuts in other areas of the budget. This is part of that balancing act. In some buildings, even with additional staff, there is not the space to add more classes and no modest budget adjustments can account for a lack of available classrooms.

Due to the limitations on adjusting class sizes, it is not unrealistic to anticipate language in contracts that focus on overage payments rather than actual meaningful reductions in class size, as we have historically seen in Oregon's largest district. What this amounts to then, is bargaining over workloads. While workload is a reasonable conversation for the bargaining table, to characterize these discussion as necessarily being about class size, ignores the very real limitations districts face.

No one wants classes to be any larger than they need to be. District leaders do their best to balance the needs of staff for appropriate compensation with various other requirements and budgetary constraints, all with an eye toward what is best for students. Requiring districts to bargain over class size in all schools, forces the hand of district leaders by inevitably leading to concessions in other areas when smaller classes are simply not possible.

The proponents will give you examples of areas where class size discussions have resulted in committees that meet to identify when a particular class necessitates a reduction or additional staff support. Those discussions are already happening within the current law. Class size does not need to be a mandatory subject of bargaining in all schools in order for that to happen.

OSBA does not believe that any teachers are eager to strike. However, we have seen bargaining become more contentious in many communities. Some districts have come uncomfortably close to a strike and some districts that are just beginning the bargaining process have received requests to transition from interest-based bargaining, which is a more collaborative process, back to traditional bargaining, which can put district leaders and staff in a more adversarial position at the bargaining table.

At OSBA, we believe that until districts have the appropriate resources from the legislature to make meaningful change in class sizes statewide--which would include investment in our facilities--we should not mandate bargaining over the topic. Such forced conversations will not lead to smaller classes where they are simply not possible, but it will likely add another layer of contention to the bargaining process, which is not in the best interest of students. Until we have the resources schools need, please do not move HB 3652 forward.

Thank you.