

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

My name is Dustin King, and I am High School English Teacher at Beaverton School District. 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.

I am extremely thankful and proud to be a member of a very strong union. Despite our collective strength and continued advocacy for our members, it seems as if class size is never even up for discussion. This is extremely disheartening as I believe it to be the number one most important issue that students and educators in Oregon face. In our district, for the last 9 years (As long as I've been an educator) we have been explicitly instructed to follow the writer's workshop model out of Teacher's college wherein we provide short mini-lessons, and spend the rest of our time conferencing one-on-one (or in small groups) with students. I truly believe that this is a wonderfully transformative model for delivering ELA/composition instruction, however, it simply does not work with class sizes being the way they are. It is impossible to effectively conference with 40 students, per section, in a given unit. Invariably, some fall through the cracks.

Furthermore, I teach a dual credit WR 121 course where I am significantly affected by large class sizes on a daily basis. My university partner (Portland State University) caps their college composition courses at 25, whereas mine are consistently at (or around) 40 students. Teachers have many strategies to mitigate time spent grading (group presentations, socratic seminars/graded discussions, etc.), but because this is a college composition course, I only assess essays. Not group essays, not discussions, but essays. A lot of them. I have about 100 students in my dual credit course, so that means every unit I am reading ~100 essays. I assess roughly 6,000 words, per student, in a given year. The situation is untenable with no signs of improving.

Research, anecdotal experience and common sense all dictate that smaller class sizes improve student outcomes. We all know that one-on-one instruction is more effective than group instruction. With current class sizes, students are receiving significantly less one-on-one help. This is such an obvious problem with such an obvious solution, it is maddening that more hasn't been done to address it.

The strategies that I, and many of my colleagues, employ in our discipline work, but they don't work when we have absurdly high class sizes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dustin King  
Beaverton School District