

Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, honorable committee members, again I'm Michael Dembrow, your former colleague on this committee, and I'm grateful for this opportunity to speak to you in support of SB 980, a committee bill that has been drafted for your consideration.

This is another bill coming out of the Task Force on Statewide Educator Salary Schedules, co-chaired by House Education Chair Neron and by me. That task force addressed a number of issues related to educator salaries and educator workforce shortages. It included teachers, classified, administrators, and parents. It was extremely ably staffed by LPRO, principally by Maya Powloski and Lisa Gezelter, who provided us with extensive research and connected us with the right experts on a variety of relevant subjects.

The workgroup process allowed us to articulate and agree upon a series of values, findings, and goals. We found that it was relatively easy to talk about licensed educators around the state, as there was a great deal of consistency in the qualifications and the work being done by teachers and other licensed personnel around the state. When it came to classified employees, on the other hand, that was not at all the case. Each of Oregon's 197 districts has its own unique set of classified job descriptions, qualifications, and compensation tables. Some are structured with clearly-defined career ladders, others not.

With such a plethora of job descriptions, it is very difficult if not impossible to make apples to apples comparisons from district to district with respect to district spending and compensation, let alone ever contemplate statewide salary schedules for these employees.

This is in contrast to state employees, where job descriptions and employee classification tables exist to provide clarity and consistency irrespective of where the employee works and which agency they are working for. The same is true for university classified employees, where again a single classification system exists to provide consistency and the opportunity for clear comparisons from institution to institution.

As a result, one of the Task Force's recommendations was to pursue a classification study of staff at Oregon's K-12 districts "to support data-driven decision making, ensure comparability, and better address the needs of classified staff." This recommendation passed unanimously.

You'll find the recommendation on p. 71 of the Task Force report, which is posted for the record.

A subgroup of the Task Force met with the Department of Administrative Services to better understand the work that they already do to analyze, develop, and modify job descriptions for state workers. We learned that they have a great deal of expertise in this area and could be a real resource in advising and overseeing the kind of classification study that the Task Force was recommending. Rather than hire additional staff to do this work themselves, though, they recommended that it could be done more efficiently by an outside firm specializing in these kinds of analyses if they were given the authority and resources to enter into such a contract.

Mr. Chair, committee members, that's what SB 980 does. It envisions a two-year process overseen by DAS, with support from an advisory committee made up of representatives from the Department of Education, COSA, and OSEA. The end product will be a set of "standardized job titles and descriptions of the work associated with the jobs to facilitate adoption by school districts and statewide uniformity." In order to keep you all informed about the progress of the work, the process includes interim and final reports to the interim education committees.

Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, committee members, thank you again for your time and attention. I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have about the process and the thinking behind the bill. I'll be followed by others who can speak more to the problem and the challenges from the front lines.

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