

Submitter: Dawn Watson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2359

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

My name is Dawn Watson, and I have served as a school board member for the Phoenix-Talent Schools for 12 years. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 2359. I want to begin by recognizing the commendable effort behind this student-led initiative, which reflects careful thought, data, and a sincere desire to improve education. However, despite these good intentions, I believe the bill overlooks key details that make it impractical to implement—especially for smaller and rural districts like ours. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to vote no on Bill 2359.

A major concern is that the bill does not account for staff who serve multiple roles in smaller districts. Teachers leading programs like band or choir, or specialists such as speech and physical therapists, often work across different grade levels or schools. Adjusting their schedules is far from simple and risks reducing student access to essential programs. Add in the challenges of coordinating shared resources and bus routes—common issues for districts with limited funds and resources—and the complications grow significantly. These interconnected systems are already stretched, and this bill could push them to the breaking point.

Additionally, the bill creates issues for districts with unique scheduling needs. For example, some rural Oregon schools operate on a four-day week, requiring longer days to meet state instructional time requirements. In Phoenix-Talent, we'd fall just five minutes short of compliance if this bill passed. That may sound minor, but we've invested considerable time and effort into building our current schedule. Undoing that work would strain our resources and staff.

Rural districts, in particular, face a heavier load under this proposal. Unlike larger urban districts with more staff and flexibility, we operate with limited budgets and tight-knit systems that leave little room for disruption. What might seem like a straightforward change can create a cascade of problems, ultimately harming our ability to serve students.

I appreciate the intent behind Bill 2359 and its focus on improving education. However, its one-size-fits-all approach fails to address the diverse needs and operational realities of Oregon's school districts. Local control is essential to tailoring schedules and solutions that fit our communities, and this bill, as written, threatens that flexibility without providing workable alternatives.

In conclusion, I recommend voting no on Bill 2359.

Sincerely,

Dawn Watson  
School Board Member, Phoenix-Talent Schools