



Chair Taylor, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business:

My name is Cynthia Branger Muñoz, and I submit this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Education Association (OEA), which represents more than 41,000 educators and education professionals across the state—from public school teachers and education support staff to community college faculty and early learning providers.

OEA urges your strong support of SB 1140. This is a practical, forward-looking bill that ensures Oregon's workplaces reflect the values of clear communication, fairness, and mutual respect.

Language is not just a means of communication—it is often tied to culture, identity, and connection. We see this every day in our schools, where speaking in one's home language can build trust, deepen understanding, and foster stronger relationships between educators, students, families, and colleagues. These same principles hold true in every workplace.

Whether someone speaks Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Mandarin, or Somali, the ability to use their primary language when appropriate helps individuals contribute more effectively and feel confident in their work. SB 1140 affirms that professionalism includes the ability to communicate in the language one knows best, and that authenticity and effectiveness can go hand in hand.

SB 1140 does not prevent employers from setting expectations where English is necessary—for safety, supervision, or business operations. Rather, it provides reasonable and clear guardrails. It requires that English-only policies be based on specific, job-related needs and that employees receive timely and transparent information about when and why those expectations apply. These protections are both fair and manageable.

We believe this legislation will reduce misunderstandings, support stronger collaboration, and help retain experienced employees across many sectors of Oregon's economy. It also sends a clear message that every person's ability to communicate is valued, and that a person's language skills are an asset—not a liability.

At its core, this bill is about strengthening workplace culture and communication. It creates an environment where people can show up ready to work, connect with others, and succeed—without fear of being unfairly restricted or misunderstood simply because of the language they speak.

On behalf of our 41,000 members, I urge you to pass SB 1140. This is a smart, balanced policy that respects workers, supports employers, and reflects the best of what Oregon stands for.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to supporting the people who keep our state running every day.