

April 30, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Grayber and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Forest Grove School Board, we stand in firm opposition to SB 916. This bill is fiscally irresponsible, operationally laborious, and educationally damaging.

Our board includes educators, special education leaders, and administrators. I am part of a proud union family! We know what bargaining looks like. We know what it takes to keep a school running. This bill would jeopardize the foundation of that work.

There is a narrative that suggests school districts do not bargain in good faith. This narrative is plainly false. Districts do bargain in good faith, balancing responsible budgeting and the needs of students with our desire to provide living wages and benefits. School districts do not have an income stream. One key part of that narrative is that School districts *are* bargaining in good faith within the limits established by the legislature when allocating the state school fund.

SB 916 would require us to set up a new administrative process, further stretching an already thin district office staff, with no additional resources or funding from the state. This bill is an unfunded mandate dressed up as labor protection. It ignores the reality of how public education is funded and the reality of how small and rural school districts are staffed and operate.

SB 916 threatens collaborative relationships we've worked years to build between our associations and district teams. It removes incentives for associations to remain at the bargaining table, financially punishes school districts through the mandated creation of yet another unfunded administrative process, and directly harms students by diverting funds and focus away from the classroom.

Lawmakers continue to ask why student outcomes aren't improving. Here's your answer: legislative bills like SB 916 drain school resources to pay for political wins and once again, will require school systems to do more with less.

There is a reason bills like this are not passing in other states. This bill is bad policy; it is not in the best interest of kids. I urge you to vote no on SB 916, and reject any other unfunded mandate that negatively impacts the education of Oregon students.

I did wait online to testify, and was hoping the public could hear from school board members and districts directly; that being said, I did appreciate hearing the questions asked by committee members which showed that there is an understanding of the complexity of this bill - I do agree with one of the panelists who said this is simply the wrong bill at the absolutely wrong time.

Respectfully,

Kristy Kottkey

Chair, Forest Grove School Board