

Submitter: Daniel Ruby

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workforce
Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4011

Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dan Ruby. I serve on the Ashland School Board, I am an educator, and I have students in our district. I am testifying today in my personal capacity, not on behalf of the board. I respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 4011.

House Bill 4011 expands “employment relations” for school district bargaining to include class size and caseload limits statewide as mandatory subjects of bargaining. Under current law, class size is a mandatory subject only in Title I schools; this bill removes that limitation. Let me be clear: I believe deeply in the value of smaller class sizes. As an educator and parent, I understand the impact on student experience and teacher workload. My concern is not about the goal. It is about the mechanism and the fiscal reality.

Personnel costs are the largest driver of district budgets. Smaller class sizes require additional staff, and additional staff increase both immediate salary and benefit obligations and long-term Public Employees Retirement System liabilities. In an environment where state funding is tight and districts are already facing structural deficits, expanding class size to a mandatory subject of bargaining raises the financial stakes significantly. When a subject becomes mandatory, districts are obligated to bargain over it, and employees may strike over it. Oregon is already one of a small number of states that allow teacher strikes. Expanding mandatory bargaining to include class size statewide increases the likelihood that negotiations will hinge on issues districts simply do not have the resources to solve comprehensively. That dynamic risks prolonged labor disputes and disruption to students.

We also need to remember the legislative history. In 1995, the Legislature clarified that class size was not a mandatory subject of bargaining for school districts. In 2021, Senate Bill 580 made class size mandatory, but only for Title I schools, targeting resources where student need is highest. House Bill 4011 moves beyond that targeted approach without providing additional, dedicated funding to support it.

Absent new state investment, districts would have to redirect funds from other priorities—career and technical education, arts, mental health supports, instructional days, or student support staff—to meet contractual class size commitments. That is not a hypothetical tradeoff; it is a budgetary inevitability.

As a board member, I take seriously my responsibility to steward public dollars for both current and future students. Sustainable progress on class size requires stable and adequate funding. Making it a universal mandatory subject of bargaining without aligning resources to that expectation risks creating commitments that districts cannot responsibly sustain.

For these reasons, and with respect for the intentions behind the bill, I urge you to oppose House Bill 4011.