

My name is Alice Eberharter. I am an elementary Speech-Language Pathologist in David Douglas School District in Portland, and the president of the David Douglas Education Association (DDEA), our licensed union. I would like to share my testimony regarding HB 4011.

Class sizes and caseloads are an essential component of educators' jobs. How big a class is makes a huge difference both for us and for our students. How do I know? I hear it from David Douglas educators all the time, and if that's not enough I analyzed class sizes in my District this fall.

Here's the impact of bigger class sizes for my union members and their students: At the elementary level, it's more difficult for educators to put required IEP and 504 accommodations into practice, student behavior increases with less individual attention, and workload increases in terms of grading, individualized feedback, and preparing materials for each school day. The classroom often feels more chaotic and stressful for everyone with 30 students in one room rather than 22 or 25.

In our elementary schools this fall, we had classes get into the range of 29-30 students. Sometimes our District will start bussing students to a different school at this point, but that's not in our contract. In our last bargain, DDEA and the District agreed to implement an Elementary Overload Account of \$300,000, which allowed the District to hire two additional teachers to lower high class sizes and hire several instructional assistants for additional support at schools that didn't have room for an extra class.

While we now have our Elementary Overload Account in place, there is still a need for smaller classes in our Middle Schools and our High School. Between our three middle schools, 123 classes had over 31 students this fall. At David Douglas High School, classes with 37 students include English, Geography, Math, and Chemistry. US History and Government has 36 students. Classes with 35 students include Geography and Biology. At the Middle School and High School levels, bigger classes mean there's a big workload increase for teachers and less capacity for individualized feedback, especially in classes with essays like English. In High School Chemistry and Biology, more students means teachers need to change lesson plans because there's not enough equipment or not enough space to do labs safely, which in turn means less hands-on learning time for students. It can also be hard just to figure out how to fit that many desks into a classroom!

You may be hearing that our student populations and school sizes are decreasing so we don't need additional funds for education. We know that the funds for class and caseload caps supports come out of the same funding pool as our cost of living adjustments (COLAs/raises) and other funds that can be allocated as part of the bargaining process. As an educator and an elected union leader, I want the ability to advocate for what my members know leads to better outcomes for students and staff: smaller class sizes and caseloads. That may mean that union members face a trade off of wages versus class sizes as long as we are bargaining over limited funds. *Let union members make that choice* and tell their bargaining teams what to prioritize so we can serve our students as well as they deserve.