

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Education Committee: My name is Miles Larson, and I'm here on behalf of the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA), representing 25,000 classified school employees across Oregon. OSEA respectfully opposes Senate Bill 1555.

We want to begin by recognizing the sponsors' effort and the shared goal reflected in today's hearing: Oregon students deserve the resources they need to thrive. We also want to acknowledge the many people who have dedicated significant time to improving Oregon's education funding tools over the years. Our disagreement is not about whether Oregon should modernize cost modeling. It is about whether Senate Bill 1555, in this short session, is the right vehicle and whether it moves Oregon toward true educational quality or toward a narrower, minimum standard that leaves students and school employees behind.

Senate Bill 1555 redefines Oregon's "quality goals" for public education as compliance with standard school district requirements, teacher licensure or qualification, and meeting statewide target metrics. From OSEA's perspective, this is a fundamental problem. Compliance should be the floor, not the ceiling. A district should not be treated as delivering "quality" simply because it is meeting minimum legal requirements. That concern was stated directly in the hearing record: "quality" should remain aspirational and tied to what students legitimately need, not reduced to a compliance definition. When "quality" is narrowed this way, it becomes easier to justify budgets that technically satisfy compliance while schools still lack the staff and supports that make learning possible.

For classified school employees, "quality" is not theoretical. It is whether bus routes can run safely and on time, whether nutrition departments have enough staff to feed students, whether instructional assistants are available to support students who need more help, and whether buildings are clean, maintained, and safe. When resources fall short, districts do not just cut programs on a spreadsheet. They cut hours and positions. They leave vacancies unfilled. They shift work onto the staff who remain. That is what "minimum compliance" looks like in real schools.

OSEA is also concerned about the direction SB 1555 takes on transparency and public accountability. The bill directs the state to contract with a public or private entity to develop the cost model. In the hearing, stakeholders raised the concern that this could become less of a public process and emphasized that the blueprint for Oregon's education funding should remain directly accountable to Oregonians.

While the bill includes documentation and posting requirements, transparency after the fact is not the same as a durable, trusted public process that consistently includes educators, school staff, families, and communities in shaping assumptions.

Relatedly, SB 1555 abolishes the Quality Education Commission and repeals major statutes tied to the current framework. That is not a minor adjustment. It is a significant restructuring that deserves more time and broader engagement than a short session allows. We also believe SB 1555 is being advanced on a timeline that does not match its promised impact. Under the bill text, the new

framework applies to reports prepared on and after November 1, 2029, and the first cost model is targeted for completion by February 1, 2028.

So even if supporters believe the model will be stronger, it does not address the urgent reality schools face now: staffing shortages, service cuts, and daily operational strain. OSEA members are experiencing those challenges today, not in 2028 or 2029.

Finally, even with the amendments discussed in Tuesday's hearing, the bill structure still risks falling out of step with real needs. Stakeholders noted that the -5 amendment reduces the major update cycle from eight years to six, but also raised that relying on inflation-only adjustments between full models will not capture how quickly education conditions can change.

This is especially concerning for the workforce that keeps schools running. When models lag, the result is not abstract. It means fewer staff, larger workloads, and diminished services for students. OSEA urges the committee to take a different path: hold SB 1555 this session and convene education partners during the interim, with a clear charge to return in the 2027 session with a fully developed, fully vetted, and appropriately funded proposal. That approach was recommended in today's testimony as the responsible way to build a trusted successor model.

It would give the Legislature and the public time to answer the hardest questions SB 1555 leaves unresolved, including how "quality" should be defined, how transparency and accountability will be preserved, and how the model will explicitly reflect the operational staffing needs that make schools function. **For these reasons, OSEA respectfully asks you to oppose SB 1555 and commit to an interim process that brings back a consensus, Oregon-accountable proposal in 2027.** Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Thank you,



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