

Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Muñoz and Scharf, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Dana Lovejoy, and I serve as President of the Greater Albany Education Association. I am here in support of HB 4011 and to offer perspective from someone who has personally negotiated class size with our district.

GAEA represents 555 educators who wholeheartedly believe that manageable class size and caseloads are not luxuries — they are foundational to student success and staff safety. In Albany, this was not a secondary issue. It was central to our negotiations.

Yet when we brought forward proposals to address class size, the district refused to engage. We were told directly that class size is a permissive subject of bargaining and that management would not discuss it at the table. In other words, the very issue our members identified as urgent for student learning and safety was declared off-limits.

After 150 days of bargaining, with safety and workload concerns unresolved, our educators made the difficult decision to strike. A strike is not taken lightly. It disrupts families, students, and communities. But it also brought attention to the dire situation in our schools — a situation that could have been addressed much earlier if class size had been a mandatory subject of bargaining.

It should not take a strike for a district to recognize educator frustration or student need.

Once the district agreed to seriously engage on class size, we were able to make meaningful progress. Through negotiations, we secured a \$500,000 class size fund to hire additional teachers and aides where they were most needed. When given a real voice, educators did what we always do: we found creative, practical solutions within the resources available. We did not seek to bankrupt the district. We worked collaboratively to target funds where they would have the greatest impact for students.

We are asking for the opportunity to have those conversations in good faith from the beginning — not after months of stalemate, not after community disruption, and not after a strike.

If class size had been a mandatory subject of bargaining from day one, our community may have avoided the hardship it experienced. We now have proof that local solutions are possible when districts and educators are required to engage.

Educators bring first-hand knowledge of what is happening in classrooms every single day. We must be trusted to have a real voice in shaping the conditions that directly affect student learning and safety.

I urge you to support HB 4011 and the -1 amendment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.