

Testimony in support of House Bill 2692, Adding Competency to Teacher Placement

House Committee on Business and Labor

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Joy Marshall, Stand for Children, Lane County Director

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SUBMITTED BY: Joy Marshall

Chair, and members of the committee,

Good morning. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am Joy Marshall, a mom of a 7th grader in Eugene public schools, and the Lane County Director of Stand for Children.

I am here today to talk about why we need HB 2692, to improve how educator placement decisions are made. In a sentence: we need to use more logic when there are staff displacements.

As has been happening to many districts all around Oregon, Eugene 4J schools lost a lot of staff in 2011, (almost 100), and people got shuffled around. How were these decisions made? Did they consider where a teacher wanted to be placed, or what school wanted that individual? Did they consider if the person was already connected to a great teacher team, who had worked together for years to coordinate the education at their grade level? Did they consider the needs of the children?

No. The personnel decisions were made by seniority and licensure only. Positions were filled by people bumping whoever happened to be behind them in "line". This caused huge disruption in schools throughout Eugene.

My daughter's school, Spencer Butte Middle School, which is in Representative Holvey's district, lost only 2 FTE due to budget cuts. This would have hurt, but the school could have figured it out. But it didn't work that way. Instead of losing two staff, because competency was not considered my daughter's school lost TWELVE. They had 40% turnover. Last week I double checked this fact with the principal.

This meant that in September, 40% of the staff showed up not knowing each other, the kids, their teaching team, their boss, or the school culture. What stress it put on all of them! They were mostly pretty heroic, but it was bad for them and hampered kids' education. There was a great lag as they hustled to learn the school and its systems, but there were real consequences. There were more discipline problems and math scores went down, both of which we attribute in no small part (although of course not solely) to the staff disruption.

Middle school kids lost their connections with trusted adults. We know this is the critical age where students decide if they are college-bound OR if they will be dropping out. Last year, in my district, we let these kids down.

What's more, teachers were put into jobs they didn't know, and didn't want to be in. At my daughter's school, a great Spanish teacher was very unhappily bumped from another school and put into Data management. Our District lost her talents, and she was unhappy, and eventually took a leave from teaching. There are many such stories of people put into the wrong situation. Teachers aren't just interchangeable pieces.

So, we want to give Districts a tool to improve the process. To be clear, this does NOT change people's seniority protections, it just allows – and does require - Districts to place people more rationally by including Competency (which is defined). It will help teachers and kids both.

This issue matters a lot. I've seen it first-hand.

My request of you is that this issue be given a fair airing. Will you support setting a work session for HB2692?

Please don't let this happen to other kids. Thank you very much for your consideration.