



February, 25th 2013

Education Committee Members:

I originally introduced this bill in the shorter, 2012 session, and now it is back in a new and improved version that will ensure that true class size information is reported to the ODE in a way that does not create new burdens on schools and districts. It replaces the distorted data now reported – data that only gives a false picture of Oregon's overcrowded classrooms.

As a former teacher and school administrator, I know that each building principal tracks how many kids are enrolled, in which rooms they've been assigned, and how many children are in each class, assigned to a teacher of record. For scheduling, hiring, and daily oversight purposes, we regularly keep track of this information.

Who doesn't have this information? We don't, as legislators. Researchers don't, even though it's important, to understand the impact of class size and other funding-related barriers to student achievement. And most importantly, the public doesn't have this information, and they should.

This bill is brought to you by a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators who want to put Oregon on the map of data transparency and accuracy. We know that by capturing the true picture of what's going on in terms of class size and student-teacher ratios, we can begin to understand in a meaningful way the conditions that impede our students' success.

Recent news reports on Oregon's class-size crisis reflect the consequences of this problem: elementary students whose overcrowded classes spur more behavioral issues. High school students too timid to ask a clarifying question in front of 50 other kids. English teachers who can't make comments on hundreds of essays every week, to help improve their students' writing skills. Science teachers, afraid to do some educational labs because overcrowding is dangerous in that environment. Educators of students with learning challenges, who no longer have the luxury of individual attention, to give them extra help in class. Classroom teachers at all levels who worry about what would happen in the event of a fire or earthquake, because there is no aisle space between desks for quick evacuation.

HB 2644 will not solve the class size problem, but it WILL help to document it beyond distorted averages and collected anecdotes. That's why I am back before you today, a second time, to put Oregon on the map – to be among the first states to collect and publish real class-size data.

One final note: I would like to thank the Department of Education for creating an amended version of the bill, which will be a simpler, cleaner version of the concept, and will have a lower fiscal impact. [Dash One Amendments]