



Oregon School Employees Association

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March 6, 2017

Senator Sara Gelser, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services
State Capitol - 900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 363

Chair Gelser and members of the committee my name is Ma'lena Wirth. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding Senate Bill 363. I work for a District in Eastern Oregon. The majority of OSEA members in our district work with students in special education.

As a building representative in my local union, I had a classified employee come to my room, distraught, and emotionally upset, because of an injury. There had been many reports about these incidents resulting in injury and nothing was done to address the matter, the administrator just kept passing this student on to another worker. This employee brought me pictures of her injuries and asked me to keep them for her because she was told to continue to work with the same student, but instead, she left and went to get medical attention.

Not an hour later, her direct supervisor was demanding I give the photos to him. When I stated that she had given them to me, not him, he insisted I give them to him. I resisted and simply stated that he would have to get them from her. You see, we live in a very small community. Everyone knows everyone. The director is friends with the parent of the student. Although, the worker-director relationship is a good one, the director feels his hands are tied as well, with limited staff and resources.

So much of these incidents can be avoided if there is proper training, reporting, and accountability for all involved with educating these students.

When conducting your studies on methods for improving the safe work environment of educators working with high needs students, please consider the incidents of the workers being affected directly. Please listen to their "day in the life". Read the letters provided to you and you will see that they are so dedicated to providing the best education possible for these children and truly care about them. We ask that the report include all of the resources necessary in order to provide the appropriate level of training to our staff, not just the level of staffing.

Thank you,

Ma'lena Wirth
Oregon School Employees Association Vice President