

TESTIMONY TO HOUSE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND LABOR

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sue McGrory, and I am a middle school Social Studies teacher from Albany, Oregon. I currently serve as the President of the Greater Albany Education Association. I have the honor of serving and representing over 560 teachers.

I'm here today to urge your support for HB 4113 to make class size a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

In a cursory web search of some private schools in Oregon, I noticed that class size is a top incentive for attending those schools. For example,

- Oregon Episcopal School says small classes "provide intimate learning environments that allow teachers to instill in each student a love for learning and the joy of discovery."
- Catlin Gabel School says they have "small classes with inspiring teachers who know every student's story."
- Santiam Christian Schools say that "small class size gives the opportunity for one-on-one instruction and allows teachers to build lasting relationships with each student."
- Zion Lutheran School says they "provide limited class sizes so that our teachers and administration can provide individual attention to our students and their families."

I think you all understand how important manageable class sizes are to the success of our students, and I'm sure you all agree with me that it is a disgrace that Oregon continuously ranks among the top 5 worst states in the nation for large, unmanageable class sizes. I know you all have heard stories in your districts about the impacts of class size on the ability to serve our students. I'm sure you understand already the role that our out of control class sizes play in creating untenable working conditions and pushing talented educators out of the profession while dissuading bright young people from ever embarking on this career in the first place.

What I really hope you take away from today is an understanding of what we are asking for in HB 4113 and a clear understanding of what this bill will NOT do.

Here's what making class size a mandatory subject of collective bargaining WILL NOT do:

- It will not set statewide metrics, benchmarks, or quotas or any other blanket standard for class size.
- It will not require or mandate any additional costs.
- It will not require or mandate any specific outcomes at the local level.
- It will not, by its passage, cost any school district in Oregon one cent of extra money.
- It will not require that districts do away with valued programs in exchange for smaller class sizes.

Here's what making class size a mandatory subject of collective bargaining WILL do:

- It will require that if one party to a school district collective bargaining agreement – a local association or a school district – raises the issue of class size for negotiation, the issue will have to be discussed.
- It will put class size where it belongs, among the other essential elements of school working conditions.
- It will apply much needed pressure to ensure districts are prioritizing manageable class sizes instead of increasing central office administration or other less essential spending.
- It will ensure that frontline workers- professional educators- have their voices heard in putting together district budgets with a focus on ensuring students get individualized attention.

In Albany, we bargain with the district in what is called an issues-based bargaining format. We actually call it a “collaborative relationship” where we work *together* to solve problems.

How would HB 4113 affect our arrangement? All it would do is allow us the chance to include class size in our mandatory subjects of bargaining, right along with salary and benefits.

Our contract—our collective bargaining agreement about teachers’ working conditions—is the most powerful tool we have to improve our students’ learning conditions.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, we’re talking about a very simple piece of legislation: “Employment relations’ includes class size.” It’s 5 words worth of change to state statutes. But it could mean all the difference to local educators in their work to serve our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.