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My name is Steve Lancaster. I am a high school social science teacher in Portland Public Schools, where I have taught for the last 15 years. I am also the Chair of the Portland Association of Teachers Contract Bargaining Team. I would like to share why, based on my experience as a contract negotiator, I believe that HB 4113 should be passed.

Given that the number of students that an educator is expected to serve is a huge factor in their overall workload, the exclusion of class size / student load from the list of mandatory topics of bargaining flies in the face of logic. The students *are* our work. Every student counts, and every student needs a teacher's individual attention. When I started my career, I was responsible for about 125 students and it took all I had to meet their needs. Now my colleagues and I are typically asked to serve 160, 180, or even 200 or more students. How can anyone look a teacher in the eye and say that a 25, 35, or 50% increase in class size is not a workload issue that must be addressed? How can it be moral to say to teachers who are struggling to serve their students and calling out for relief, "Sorry, the law says we don't have to talk to you about that."?

Maintaining class size as "permissive" subject of bargaining has in practice meant that class size is no longer talked about at all. Year after year, teacher associations attempt to bring the issue of over-crowded classrooms and over stressed teachers into negotiations, and year after year school districts state wide routinely refuse to talk about it. This legally condoned silence is one of the factors that has led Oregon to have some of the largest class sizes in the country; not a statistic for Oregonians to be proud of by any means.

One of the serious consequences of a vastly over stressed system is that student safety can be compromised. This is what happened in PPS. Over-crowded classrooms and changes in student discipline policies, led to students and teachers becoming unsafe in many of our schools. Since safety is a mandatory subject of bargaining, PPS and the PAT began talking about what could be done to make our schools safer. This conversation led to the common sense understanding that the number of students under the supervision of a teacher plays a major role in school safety.

With the topic of class size on the negotiating table, the PPS and PAT bargaining teams were able to have a rational conversation about the competing needs of our District and the resource limitations that constrained us. We were able to discuss what programs and issues would receive greater investment and which areas would be trimmed. Rather than using the traditionally adversarial approach to negotiations, we engaged in a collaborative conversation focused on problem solving with the interests of both the District and the teachers fully in mind. Ultimately, we were able to arrive at mutually acceptable class size limits and commit to

them in our contract. Both the District and the union believe that the class size improvements we negotiated are financially responsible and will improve teaching and learning conditions in all our schools.

The success that PPS and PAT has just enjoyed in our contract negotiations happened *in spite of the law* because we started talking about the elephant in the room: class size. PPS talking about class size should not be the rare exception to the rule. Every district should have a duty to at least discuss the issue and decide what kinds of trade-offs are possible. In and of itself HB 4113 will not make any school district better or worse off than it currently is. But it will at least ensure that every district will have the opportunity to engage in an honest conversation about something that really matters to the quality of teaching and learning in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you and thank you for your support of teachers and students.

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