

February 16, 2019

Senate Committee on Education

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to heartily support SB 764 which would mandate that class size *and caseload limits* be part of all school district collective bargaining efforts.

I am a Speech-Language Pathologist who has worked in Oregon public schools for the past 15 years. Having a reasonable caseload size is the difference between being able to actually do what SLPs are trained to do and simply being a body on a payroll so that a district can mark the federally-mandated services box indicating they have an SLP on staff. For many years there has been a shortage of SLPs willing to work in the schools here in Oregon and across the country. Unmanageable caseloads are the primary reason for this since we have other employment options: acute care hospitals, rehab and skilled nursing facilities, academia and private practice.

Additionally, for over 25 years the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has recognized that a caseload of over 40 students “strains even a dedicated professional” (Chiang & Rylance, 1993), and that “caseloads of students with communication disorders should not exceed 40 under any circumstances” (Workload Analysis Approach for Establishing Speech-Language Caseload Standards in Schools, ASHA 2002). “Despite this recommendation, caseloads have consistently exceeded 40 students, hovering around a mean of between 45 and 59 students” (ASHA 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008; Blood, Ridenour, Thomas, Qualls & Hammer, 2002; Dowden *et al*, 2006; Peters-Johnson, 1996, 1998) . “Caseload size continues to be an area of concern for school-based SLPs, and efforts to address this problem must continue in order to prevent long-term struggles with SLPs’ dissatisfaction, shortages, and turnover.” (Katz, Maag, Fallon, Blenkarn & Smith, 2010).

In the interest of our public school students with Communication Disorders, I urge you to move SB 764 forward with your full support. It is long past time that these students receive a level of services which will ultimately allow them to reach their full potential. This is only possible when Speech-Language clinicians have caseload limits just as classroom teachers need reasonable class sizes in order to serve their students adequately.