

Good afternoon. My name is David Wilkinson, and I have taught English at Westview High School in the Beaverton School District for the better part of 19 years. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the consequences and impact of Oregon's growing class sizes and the damage they do to the very future of our state, our children.

There are a range of ways our overcrowded classrooms negatively impact our kids, from compromising their physical safety to undermining their interest and willingness to participate in school.

Science labs in my building were designed and built to safely instruct 30 students, but currently have over 40. Common sense dictates Career and Technical Education classes where students use power tools should have limited class sizes, yet we have CTE classes in my building with 40 students.

In many classes, like foreign languages, for example, assessments need to be conducted face to face or one on one, and therefore occur during class, but with classes as large as they are, it is impossible to see every student and complete this work. So though people may believe or perceive increasing class size has no negative impact, this is clearly false. On the contrary, large class sizes lead to inefficiency and a substantial waste of class time.

My studies and experience show me clearly that building relationships with students keeps them invested and participating in school. But large class sizes compromise my ability to truly get to know my kids. And as the research that Laurie has provided you illustrates, this has the most substantial impact on kids with the greatest challenges outside of school. So, if we wish to speak of using public education as a method and vehicle for social justice, we can't just pay lip service to what kids clearly need. They need a manageable and supportive place to learn. They need class sizes substantially reduced.

In light of all this, it would seem the public would have cried foul a long time ago, and the situation would have been corrected. I suspect what has happened is people drive by schools and see the art up in the windows and the kids playing in the school yard, and they perceive things are much the same as when they were in school. This misperception seems to lull many people and keep them from acting. What I wish they knew is when I began in this field we considered 27 students a large class. Over the years that number has been eclipsed and crept up to the asinine numbers we have now. I currently have a creative writing class with 39 students. That is a 44% increase in under two decades. I wish I had time to illustrate all of the ways increasing class size by over 40% degrades the system. As my time is limited, I strongly encourage you to look to the research.

Most of what I've said to you I suspect you've heard before. Well informed people such as yourselves have an understanding of our underfunded schools. But the most important perspective I can provide you today is the perspective of someone who benefits from our public education system every day. You see, I am a graduate of our public schools. I still benefit from the great privilege of attending well-funded schools in Beaverton in the eighties. I then went

on to University of Oregon and graduated the spring before the destruction of Ballot Measure Five hit. In other words, I speak to you today not just as a public educator but as a member of the very last generation of Oregon kids who benefitted from a better funded system. Having had the experience I did as a student and comparing it with what students receive now, the contrast is sickening. As a grown adult who is now responsible for future generations, I believe these kids have every right to receive the education I received. I believe Oregon has the responsibility to care for these kids every bit as well as it cared for me.

I can't and won't ignore what I see happening to our kids, and I don't want you to either. I speak to you today because I feel a strong and compelling social responsibility to right this injustice. My generation, all generations who came before the kids in school now, owe it to them and the future. This is our responsibility, and the time to right this wrong is now.

Thank you.