



**Date:** February 28, 2019  
**To:** House Revenue Committee, Chair Nathanson and Members  
**From:** Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations  
**RE:** *HB 2386 [Rural Teacher Tax Credit]*

On behalf of OEA's 45,000 members, I am submitting testimony in reluctant opposition to this bill, which would attempt to solve a rural teacher shortage with a tax credit incentive.

We oppose HB 2386 for several reasons:

**The Wrong Solution to the Problem.**

Schools in Oregon have faced decades of disinvestment that have created a host of issues and concerns – high class sizes, lost programs, insufficient staffing, loss of electives, disrupted learning due to students with unaddressed trauma, and low educator morale. Teachers are not only dropping out of the workforce in record numbers, fewer college students are getting teaching degrees. This is a problem not only in rural Oregon, but all over the state. To solve these issues, we are hopeful that a significant new investment in public education is possible due to the work of this legislature.

**Lack of Efficacy.**

The Joint Committee on Student Success Road Show over the past year has revealed many of these issues, and has spent time focusing on the rural staffing struggle as well. What we've learned from the testimony of rural educators is that the best approach for boosting applicants for rural teaching jobs is to invest in "grow your own" programs. Newly minted teachers who prefer city life will not likely be induced to take a job in Arlington or Pilot Rock, for instance, for \$3,000 to \$5,000. Rural communities that are able to help their own students achieve the training they need to teach in their home communities will likely retain those human investments. So lack of efficacy is the second reason we oppose the bill.

**Preferential Treatment for the Few.**

To create a two-tiered teacher corps, with some who receive tax incentives and some who do not, will not improve morale and will breed resentment. Given that teacher salaries lag about 20 percent behind that of similar professions, the entire workforce of public school teachers ought to be fairly compensated – not differentially compensated via the tax code.

**Never Try to Solve a Problem through Tax Breaks When a Program Could Be Funded Instead.**

The most important concern we have about this bill is that it violates our principle of investing in proven programs, instead of gambling on experimental tax giveaways. Were the state of Oregon overflowing with excess resources, we would ask for an investment in grow your own programs, in loan forgiveness, and in other proven strategies instead of digging a bigger hole in the State Budget. Thank you for considering our perspective.