

Good Afternoon House Committee on Education, Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Alonso Leon, Cheri Helt and distinguished committee members. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you.

My name is Rita Glass, I have the extreme pleasure of currently serving as the president for the Association of Salem -Keizer Education Support Professionals better known as ASK ESP (union for ESP's in SKSD. I am speaking before you today in support of House Bill 2673 to establish the recognition of Educational Support Professional of the Year in the State of Oregon.

I started in 1989 as an educator in Salem, as a bilingual instructional assistant at the original Bush ES, after 15 years became their Community School Outreach Coordinator and stayed at Bush for 19 years. I loved my job and saw firsthand how a group of committed, passionate ESPs make a difference in the lives of our students and families. Title schools has always been my favorite to work in. ESP's supervise recess, breakfast and lunch (that is where we learn and hear of our students' stories, hopes, fears and who they really are), we administer medications, drive buses, maintain a clean learning environment for all students We are students first and last contact of their daily educational experience. ESP's give countless number of hours of their personal time and volunteer for fundraisers, afterschool programs coaching and many other extracurricular activities

The most rewarding part of my experience is alive today, as I see so many of the students, as adults and they remember my name. Many have become ESP educators themselves in SKSD. My favorite story is we had chronic absenteeism back then it was mainly due to headlice. I would have lice cleaning/treatment workshops for parents. There was one student that we just could not rid her of lice, she would cry every time we would have to send her home. Her only dream as a 3rd grader was to get perfect attendance for 1 month. I decided to go to her house

with rented carpet shampooer in hand, plenty of NIX and teach her much older single mom how to clean her home, bedding etc. to get rid of the lice. Every day she would come into my office for her head check. We would mark on the calendar each day she was able to stay in school and oila she proudly received perfect attendance for the last 5 months of school. I saw her at Winco last year and she still remembers that assistance and she shared; that she still has all of her perfect attendance certificates that she proudly displays in her home as a reminder to her own children how important going to school every day is.

That is the type of connection/relationships our ESP's have with our students.

I believe that a State ESP of the Year Award would speak volumes to an important group of educators by recognizing our profession for the strong and committed contribution we make in supporting the success of all students in the State of Oregon. Not all are licensed staff but, all are educators none the less.

Thank you for your time.