

March 3, 2021

Re: Senate Bill 580

To: Members of the Senate Education Committee

I am providing written testimony due to a schedule conflict that occurred after I had committed to providing verbal testimony in support of Senate Bill 580 which would make class size and caseload size mandatory subjects of collective bargaining. I testified in front of the Senate Education Committee on February 19, 2019 in support of this bill, although it was under a different number (SB 764). This bill would allow for local districts and local unions to determine how best to address class size and caseload size limits.

As a speech-language pathologist (SLP) who works for Salem-Keizer Public Schools and holds the positions of School-based SLP Representative and President-Elect for the Oregon Speech-Language & Hearing Association (OSHA), this bill has an impact on over 1000 SLPs in the state of Oregon. Caseload often refers to the number of students we see for special education services and is one part of our total workload which refers to all activities required and performed by school based SLPs including tasks such as face-to-face services, evaluations for special education eligibility, and completing legally required paperwork. As an SLP, my ability to complete all required tasks within my workday is significantly hampered due to a large caseload size and an unmanageable workload. Due to large caseloads and an unmanageable workload, it is not uncommon to have a student on my caseload who has been in special education for 5 or more years, often starting during preschool years continuing into mid-elementary school. One of the effects of the excessive caseloads and workloads is that the time required to provide effective intervention is not available resulting in larger than best practice intervention group size and/or groups that have dissimilar therapeutic needs. Reducing caseload and workload to appropriate levels would likely result in significant reduction of the time students would need to access speech and language therapy services and increase their access to regular education content.

I fully support and encourage you to pass SB 580 so that local school districts and their unions are required to discuss class size and caseload size as a subject of collective bargaining so that our students may receive appropriate services they are entitled to as well as providing teachers and special education staff with appropriate caseloads so they can provide effective and efficient services to students.

Sincerely,

Melissa Link-Cole, MA, CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist