



May 19, 2021

TO: House Business and Labor Committee
FR: Iton Udosenata, COSA President
RE: Testimony in opposition to SB 580

Good afternoon Chair Holvey and members of the House Business and Labor Committee.

My name is Iton Udosenata and I serve as the President of the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators. I am here today on behalf of our 2500 members across Oregon, asking you to oppose Senate Bill 580. While we can all agree that large class sizes are a challenge for our staff and students, and must be addressed, this bill will pose serious challenges for our school districts and likely lead to more inequitable outcomes for our historically underserved students.

Required Bargaining Around Class Size Takes the Focus Off Equitable Student Investments

At a time when conversations about equity are at the forefront, contract language requiring equivalent class sizes across district schools is a conversation about equality, not equity. It may make it harder for districts to invest resources in schools and students that need them the most.

I currently serve as an Assistant Superintendent in the Salem-Keizer school district, but I also served as the principal at North Eugene High School for several years. As a principal, our staff sought innovative ways to turn the dial to increase student achievement. One of the most effective strategies was through academic intervention courses that allowed us to support students who struggled with math and reading.

Both classes required additional resources and staffing to help get students back on track and, importantly, experience success and confidence that continued with them in other courses. In order to do this, we needed to be able to shift resources within our school. This sometimes meant adding a few students to courses, like P.E. or AP calculus, in order to prioritize supports where they were most essential in our school. We struck a careful balance so the students in the larger classes were able to thrive in this educational setting without sacrificing support or engagement.

Many school districts have chosen to invest more resources in their schools with the students who need the most support. Schools with large numbers of English Language Learners, students in poverty, historically underserved students, or students with disabilities -- and small, remote schools, or schools with large numbers of students at risk of dropping out -- need more resources in order to achieve equitable outcomes. Wealthier schools and students often do not need the kinds of extra supports that many of their peers need in order to be successful. School districts should not be put in a position where they are required to bargain in order to keep making investments where students need them most.

Senate Bill 580 is the Wrong Approach to Addressing Class Size

I fear that several programs, intended to extend our mission to be equitable, will be in jeopardy if this bill passes. In the Salem-Keizer school district we are already concerned about meeting our current school district obligations given the challenges with the state budget. Senate Bill 580, though well intentioned, will place an undue burden onto some of our most impacted student populations during these especially challenging times.

Class size is already a permissive subject of bargaining and without additional funding and school space, passage of this bill will have no appreciable effect on the number of students in a classroom. Based on what we have seen in Portland Public Schools, it has the potential to divert resources from students of color and other historically underserved students.

On behalf of COSA, we ask you not to move forward SB 580 during the 2021 Session. Thank you for your time today.