

May 19, 2021

To: Chair Paul Holvey and Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor
From: Morgan Beltz, Oregon Business & Industry (OBI)
RE: OBI Testimony in Opposition to SB 580

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue for Oregon Business & Industry (OBI). OBI is Oregon's largest and most comprehensive business association representing approximately 1,600 businesses that employ more than 250,000 Oregonians.

Oregon businesses deeply value our public education system, recognizing that a strong education is key to a successful workforce. We consistently support targeted investments in education that are tied to measurable outcomes in student achievement. That is why OBI opposes the proposal in SB 580 as it is not targeted towards student success.

Mandating class size as part of collective bargaining will ultimately put school districts in a tough financial position, even though districts and unions can already opt to include it in the bargaining process under existing law. It can cost hundreds of millions of dollars for a district to hire enough educators to lower class sizes to the agreed number. This also presents a logistical challenge depending on the space available at facilities. Districts can be forced to choose between targeted equity investments proven to help student success, programs such as career technical education that increase graduation rates, or hiring more teachers.

As recently reported by [The Oregonian](#), Portland Public Schools' policy of overage payments based on class size thresholds has not resulted in decreased class size investments, but enhanced payments to educators at the traditionally top tier schools in the district. This takes resources away from programs that support equitable student outcomes.

The Student Success Act of 2019 created the Student Investment Account for districts to apply for grants for targeted programs, including reducing class size. This allows districts to focus on the approach that makes the most sense for their communities with the resources available to them. Earlier this year, Oregon Department of Education Director Colt Gill penned an [op-ed](#) announcing the new record high 82.6% four year graduation rate, giving credit to the investments our state has made in closing the achievement gap.

The evidence in Oregon shows we are closing the student achievement gap because of the incredible work of our teachers, community partners and historic level of investments into targeted programs by our state. We should not be implementing complex and costly new standards into the collective bargaining process, which will ultimately benefit unions more than the students and families they serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this important issue. At OBI we look forward to continuing the conversation around targeted approaches to improve student success and enhance the overall classroom experience.

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