



# Service Employees International Union, Local 503, OPEU

To: Senate Business and Labor Committee Chair Senator - Chuck Riley; Vice Chair - Bill Hansell; Senator Kate Lieber and Senator Kayse Jama

From: SEIU Local 503 – Len Norwitz/Debbie Koreski

Re: SB 496

Date: February 2, 2021

SEIU 503 supports **SB 496** – which removes the prohibition of payment of unemployment insurance benefits to nonprofessional employees providing school food services in an educational institution and for federal Head Start program employees during the period between two successive academic years or terms.

It is our understanding that Senate Bill 496 extend UI benefits to this much needed but oft-times neglected work force who provide essential services to students and support families during these most trying times.

SEIU 503 represents a little more than 500 workers at Portland Public School. About 300 are custodians and the other 200 work in the Nutrition Services departments. Our members are on site with students daily - as we maintain and provide key student services and support their success. And we know the importance of having nourished and healthy students as they make their way through their days on campus. There are 90 cafeterias at PPS that serve 31,000 student – almost a third of these students qualify for free or reduced lunches. And we know our workers are valued by them and their families – as are the workers on Higher Educational campuses.

We strongly support the flexibility that we believe Senate Bill 496 intends to provide to workers in food services. SEIU also supports extending this protection to front line workers at Oregon’s seventeen community colleges and seven public universities. Please make sure that this legislation includes them as well.

Thank you.

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