

February 14, 2023

Senate Committee on Education  
Chair Michael Dembrow

RE SB 283-3

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 283-3.

As a member of OSEA, a few years ago, when I was still working for the Newberg School District, the district decided that our building no longer needed behavior specialists serving our school. However, the kids that they were supporting day in and day out were still at our school. At the time, I was an assistant in the life skills classroom and my principal approached me about collaborating to come up with a plan to help support these students. I had grown to love and understand collaborative problem solving and behavior management skills, so I was eager to jump on this opportunity to help support my school and my community. A few months into me taking on this task, my principal got an email with some paperwork that would effectively result in a major cut to my pay.

As a Life Skills education assistance (EA), I was not only at a higher step, but was also given a differential. Because I was no longer working in the life skills classroom all day, apparently they felt like I was no longer doing work worthy of that pay step and differential. In reality, I had stepped in to do the job of two people who were typically each paid anywhere from double to triple my pay. The district left the students high and dry. I stepped up and now my pay was going to be cut? Good joke. Luckily my principal was one of the good ones and fought them year after year as I continued to establish a successful Mindfulness Room that was able to support EVERY student in our school on any given day. I would facilitate group play and activities with students in all programs and grades. This wasn't simple or easy, but it was worth it to see the growth in skills as kids learned to manage and identify their emotions and help their friends do the same.

The work I did made a huge difference in our school culture, and in our students' well-being. The district budgeting process consistently included a discussion on the reduction in my wage. It was a yearly reminder that identified an opportunity to reconnect with those of us implementing a quality education experience for all students. It's one thing to work for peanuts, it's another thing to have to consistently justify why you deserve those peanuts year after year.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Shotts

Board Member, Zone 1  
Oregon School Employees Association