

COURTNEY NERON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 26



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support of SB 414

February 21, 2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

For the record, I am Courtney Neron and I am the State Representative for HD 26, in support of SB414.

As a classroom teacher for many years, my students and I experienced extreme temperatures, broken HVAC systems, lack of air circulation, and I am committed to advocating for schools across our state to have conditions that support learning. Imagine teaching high school Spanish in a room filled with 39 teenagers, where the windows didn't open, the HVAC was broken and it was spring. I used to teach with sweat dripping down my back, the reward for answering questions was being misted with a spray bottle, and I dreamed at night of throwing desks through the window in order to get oxygen flowing in our room again.

Air quality issues and failing or inadequate HVAC systems have been known to educators for quite a long time, but the pandemic shed light on the severity of the problem. According to the Oregonian, in 2022 "testing identified nearly 500 out of 2,000 classrooms - or 25% - in elementary and middle schools with exceptionally low ventilation and filtration rates, even with the purifiers running full blast." and that "in all, about 1,250 classrooms in those buildings - or more than 60% - do not meet higher levels frequently recommended by air quality experts."¹ We must address deferred building maintenance, improper ventilation, exposure to chemicals, and inadequate air filtration across our state. The lack of adequate airflow in Oregon classrooms puts teachers, children and their families at risk of respiratory viruses that have deep impacts on health, absenteeism, and disruptions in class.

SB 414 and HB 3031 promote healthy, safe learning and working environments by

- Requiring Indoor Air Quality assessments of K12 school facilities every five years
- Requiring a review of an independent third-party engineer to ensure proper corrections
- Requiring minimum labor standards and supports career and education that promotes diversity, equity, career and education opportunities through apprenticeships

Additionally, the bill leverages federal funding that is set to expire in 2024, we must act now to pull in these dollars.

¹ <https://www.oregonlive.com/education/2022/05/below-the-bare-minimum.html>

Colleagues, please join me in supporting SB 414 with passage from committee.

Sincerely,

Rep Courtney Neron

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Courtney Neron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

House District 26
Wilsonville, including the Charbonneau district, King City, Sherwood,
Tigard/Bull Mountain, and Parrett Mountain