



February 28, 2023

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, Members of the Committee:

My name is Kyndall Mason, I am a public affairs consultant for the Oregon Education Association. We represent more than 41,000 educators, classified staff, and specialists in Oregon's public K-12 and Community College systems. This testimony is in support of SB 524.

Several sessions ago, I worked on a similar bill in long term care. The organization I was working for supported such a concept for two reasons; 1. We were, and probably still are, experiencing a crisis in the workforce, 2. The moral judgements about someone's past being coded into law didn't keep vulnerable people safe, it just kept good people, who made some mistakes, from moving on with a career and opportunity to thrive.

Since the passage of that bill, we have not seen an uptick in violence or any other crime towards Oregon's most vulnerable populations, from their care givers. What we have seen is folks simply being given the opportunity to move on with their lives. The Oregon Education Association is in support of putting together a task force to look at which part of current law is keeping good people out of education. We love a good story about people turning their lives around and giving back to the communities they were once part of, but with our current set of laws, we are preventing opportunity for both our kids and our adults.

As we learn our laws change, and it's time we reflect on what that means in education. It is not our job to punish and judge others based on a past. If we want a state where people have opportunity to change, grow, contribute to their communities, then we shouldn't enact laws that trap them in low wage jobs, with no opportunity for advancement. We can change that.

SB 524 simply asks that the state convene a table to analyze where, in Oregon statute, we are being overly harsh and critical of those who wish to make a difference in the lives of our youth, perhaps the difference they needed as a young person. We urge you to pass SB 524, so that we can start doing the work to make sure that we are doing everything we can to not just give opportunity, but to turn over every stone in our quest to stabilize the workforce in education, a sector that has been in crisis since before COVID-19 and is now at a critical crossroads.

Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,
Kyndall Mason
Public Affairs Consultant, Oregon Education Association