



Oregon School Employees Association

www.osea.org

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March 28, 2023

House Committee on Education
Representative Courtney Neron, Chair

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 3198 - 3 Amendments

Chair Neron and Members of the House Committee on Education:

My name is Sarah Wofford, and I am the president of Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA). I live in Grants Pass with my family, where I have worked at Rogue Community College for 12 years as a classified accounting specialist. I am the proud mother of a high school senior who is graduating this year!

On behalf of the over 23,000 members of OSEA in all corners of our great state, in nearly all levels of Oregon public education, including Head Start programs, K-12 school districts, education service districts, special districts like parks and rec, and community colleges, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the amendments to HB 3198

We agree with Governor Kotek's support for the strategic need to address early childhood learning that emphasizes literacy. Investing in early childhood literacy is the gift that keeps giving throughout our lives. Organizationally, OSEA will be fully engaged in the development of this policy. We can facilitate our Head Start members' expertise as many have been shaping kids' first educational experiences for decades. OSEA supports fully leveraging existing public and private programs by increasing culturally specific literacy skills. We hope that these programs will provide meaningful investments in Oregon families' futures.

Classified employees are the most diverse component in the professional public education workforce, representing racial, cultural, language, age and geographic diversity. We more closely reflect the students we support and appreciate the clear legislative provisions that expressly support increased access for all students and their families. Our early childhood learning members currently provide daily support for children as they build life and literacy skills. Most of Oregon's Head Start programs are private entities, although some are public. Regardless of public or private facilities, our members are available to kids and families every day, to make a difference for our tiny neighbors.

We want to call attention to the importance of recruitment, retention and support for early childhood employees as this particular sector of Oregon's education workforce has a very high rate of turnover. While investments in curriculum are key, it is critically important to invest in family wage jobs to ensure higher retention and recruitment. It is invaluable when an educator supports multiple siblings in a program over the years.

*The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) is an affiliate of
the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the AFL-CIO.*





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When classified employees can earn a living wage, they can support generations. This ability to lift up members in the same household or neighborhood, lifts up communities. OSEA appreciates the importance of alignment with existing planning efforts. This new element should connect well to the Student Investment Account (SIA) strategic distribution planning process.

The dash 3 amendments to HB 3198 prioritize the importance of early childhood literacy and the lasting lifetime effects for all Oregon's students by increasing early literacy in prekindergarten students.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

Sincerely,

Sarah Wofford,
OSEA President

