

Submitter: Sofia Puorro  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

My name is Sofia Puorro and I am currently a substitute teacher for Portland Public Schools advocating for SB 283 and HB 3178.

I began the 2022-2023 school year as a 1st grade teacher in Milwaukie. My school has an incredible staff, however, we found ourselves beginning the year with many support staff positions unfilled. At the beginning of my first year of teaching, I was faced with a classroom that did not have nearly enough support.

At any given moment, I would have one student screaming in the back of the classroom due to overstimulation and another student trying to leave the classroom unaccompanied and I was the only adult in the room. Because I consistently had to address these urgent circumstances, it was extremely difficult to move forward in the curriculum let alone regulate the class in such a chaotic learning environment. Students with individualized education plans and students with as yet unidentified learning disabilities were particularly affected considering they could not get the extra support they needed from adults.

After some time, my mental health care provider urged me to take a leave of absence as my health was in peril. At the end of the leave, I chose to resign from the position in order to maintain stable mental health. I was devastated to do so because I had developed strong relationships with the staff, students, and families in my school community, but it was a necessary decision.

Unfortunately, this is not a unique story. Educators, especially newer educators, are leaving the profession in droves because the working conditions and the compensation are simply not sustainable. Classified staff require the incentive to make a live-able wage with fair benefits and licensed staff rely on the support of our classified employees in order to provide quality education to our students. Without the funding from these education workforce bills, Oregon schools would not be able to maintain a healthy ecosystem of staff and students.

With the proper staff support, students are able to get their needs met and therefore able to focus their energy on learning. Levels of engagement greatly increase and even when undesirable behaviors do occur, they do not escalate. All students are better able to move forward in the curriculum because the students who might normally display attention-seeking behaviors due to frustration get the help they need.

Our students need quality educators now more than ever. Please support SB 283 and HB 3178 so Oregon educators can help our students thrive. Thank you.