

Submitter: Maxine Agather  
On Behalf Of: OSEA  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

To the Hearing Committee,

My time with the Corvallis School District has been some of my most fulfilling, and has been the first time that I've had a job that I've truly loved in my nearly 30 years of life.

My first position with the district was as a health aid, which was incredibly rewarding work, but which had a monthly take home pay that was less than my rent alone. Thankfully, I was able to find a position as an Office Manager at another school, which allowed me to continue working in the district that I've come to love, but even so I have recently had to take a second job in the evenings to keep up with the rising Cost of Living in Corvallis. And that's even as a 40/week employee. I've befriended coworkers who have had to quit their jobs due to the income provided not being sustainable for even the basic necessities of food, housing, etc.

Education is one of the most powerful and essential tools that a community has for improvement and longevity, and it is without question that capable, passionate, and qualified teaching/support staff are absolutely essential to maintaining educational standards and helping our children succeed. High turnover rates make it incredibly difficult to maintain a consistent and rich culture within any school, and low wages tend to attract those that are only looking for temporary work, or who may not have the qualifications necessary to teach our children at a high level.

From my own experience, I can say that I am someone who is incredibly passionate about my work and add value to our student's lives, and who genuinely loves what I get to do, but who almost had to leave for look for other employment, and who is still struggling to make ends meet, even in the highest paying classified position offered at my school. I truly believe that we cannot continue to grow as a community, county, state, or country, without being willing to put the investment to our schools and education that it deserves. Our children are our futures, and passionate and qualified staff are the foundation of support that will keep their futures bright.

Sincerely,  
Maxine Agather