

February 7, 2024

Rep. Courtney Neron, Chair  
House Committee on Education  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 4077 – Dash 2 Amendment

Chair Neron and members of the House Committee on Education,

Hello, my name is Kyrsti Sackman and I am a Special Education ParaProfessional and the OSEA chapter President out of Beaverton. I am speaking as a member of OSEA to give you a better understanding of why this HB 4077 is so important to educators like me. I would like to thank you for allowing us time to come here and speak to you about the importance of the dedicated, compassionate, challenging work that so many of our classified staff do each day.

I want to start first and foremost to say, I LOVE SPECIAL EDUCATION. It is my passion and to be honest, I really love working with the “challenging kids” - the kids who need more, more of the special patience and love and special skills - the kids that have a harder time being seen with value and importance in this world- those kids- those kids are why I show up everyday no matter how exhausted, overwhelmed, under supported I feel. I show up for them.

Living in this special education world- Work Hurts- because my students, my babies, they struggle to regulate their own bodies, their words and ability to be seen and heard - so they communicate in the ways they know. In supporting them, I get hurt and most of the time for my students - I am okay with that. I am okay to take that bite, scratch, kick, to sprint 200 meters across a muddy field cause we saw something we liked - I am willing to do that because it matters to me to make sure that my babies are okay.

I am lucky to work in a district that has an online form that all staff can access at any point to document an injury. But that’s not enough. I have had an admin approach me while working with a student, to ask me what I am doing with students: why is it that I have more documented injuries than all the other paras in the building combined? I said, “Well maybe I am just the only one reporting,” at which he laughed and said to maybe simmer it down with the kids.

I had more than 20 injury reports filed at that point and the only thing I received was a message that I somehow was doing something wrong. It was not acknowledged the dedicated hard work I was doing and the reality of how I was showing up despite how much work was hurting. It is no wonder that I have to constantly encourage my coworkers to report their injuries. They are frustrated and losing hope.

If my admin in my building, who knows my students behaviors and observes me working - if he can't see how much work hurts and the impact on me and all the other hard working staff in my ONE school building

HOW IN THE WORLD does anyone SEE THAT WORK HURTS ALL THE TIME FOR OUR DEDICATED, COMPASSIONATE CLASSIFIED STAFF? WORK SHOULDN'T HURT

We need this bill and state-reported data so we can FIX THIS. Thank you.

Kyrsti Sackman  
OSEA Beaverton Chapter President