

From The Desk of
Representative Zach Hudson



Legislators,

On behalf of the Oregon Education Association, representing more than 42,000 educators across the state of Oregon, we wanted to make clear: legislators taking action to support teachers is fundamentally also supporting Oregon's students.

This is why we support SB 916 and have worked closely with school districts throughout this process to address their concerns — the version of SB 916A now reflects that collaboration. The bill was amended in the Senate to include clear safeguards that protect districts from so-called "double payments." If a strike ends in a settlement that includes backpay, unemployment benefits can either be deducted from the backpay amount or recouped by the Employment Department.

The fiscal impact to districts comes down to timing, not cost. And contrary to recent editorial claims, most Oregon school districts are well-positioned to manage this. Based on our internal analysis and public data, many districts maintain general fund reserves of up to 20%—reserves specifically intended to provide flexibility in moments like these. The idea that SB 916 would trigger widespread cuts to student programs simply isn't supported by the financial data or typical district budgeting practices.

It's also critical to keep the scope of this bill in perspective. Over the past 20 years, there have been only eight educator strikes out of more than 1,700 contract negotiations—less than 0.5%. For education support professionals, there has been only one strike in Oregon's history. These actions are rare, because educators and school staff do not want to strike. When they do, it is because conditions in our schools have become unsustainable. They are the canaries in the coal mine—raising concerns that affect both student learning and staff well-being.

Proponents of SB 916A have done everything possible to meet the evolving goalposts outlined by school district leaders. We've delivered compromise language that districts helped shape and now feel comfortable with. What remains is not a radical shift in policy—it's a basic protection for the people who serve Oregon's students every day. **Educators should not be pushed into financial precarity for engaging in legal collective action to improve public schools.**

This is not a threat to student outcomes. It is an investment in the people who make student success possible.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Oregon's educators and the students they serve.

In solidarity,

Cynthia Branger Muñoz

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