

Dear House Committee on Education Members:

My name is Matt Bell, and I'm writing in support of HB 2307. I'm the President of the West Linn-Wilsonville Education Association and started meeting with our CFO and our Superintendent in October to discuss their worries about a potential budget shortfall. Our District had an \$18 million dollar deficit last year and had cut \$10 million, but our deficit was still \$14.3 Million for this coming school year. Their explanation of the shortfall included several unfunded mandates including the light bulb bill. Our District is currently between Bonds and plans to pass another one in the fall of 2025, so some of these costs are being paid out of our general fund now but will hopefully move to the Capitol Bond. The high cost of this bill is the replacement of the light fixtures, many of which are older in our buildings.

From our Director of Operations Pat McGough: "With the passage of HB 2531, the sale or distribution of fluorescent light bulbs are now prohibited in Oregon. As fluorescent lighting was the standard for schools for many decades, virtually all schools constructed before 2015 used fluorescent lights, with some even as late as 2018. They will now all be mandated to transition to LED lighting. This transition will have a significant impact. With approximately 1.8 million square feet of buildings in the West Linn-Wilsonville School District, it is estimated that the cost will approach \$30,000,000. The strategy for our District is to transition in phases through the use of General Obligation (GO) Bonds. Parts from old fixtures will be salvaged to use for replacement parts until the next GO Bond cycle. The first phase will be approximately \$5.6M in projects identified in a potential GO Bond to be placed on the ballot in November, 2025. However, there is risk in any ballot initiative that the measure will not be approved by the voters. Should the ballot measure fail, the District will be forced to replace failed fluorescent lamps and fixtures with Operating funds. This mandate would directly impact the amount of funding available for our mission: provide education for students. Every dollar spent would be one less dollar for the classroom. With the West Linn-Wilsonville School District is often considered as having more resources than others in Oregon, this unfunded mandate will directly divert funding from the classroom just to maintain what exists today. The goal to reduce energy costs and impact to the environment is worthy, but it must be accompanied with support at the State level with appropriate funding."

We hope that this bill can help reduce the need for districts across the state to use general fund money for compliance, particularly in districts that don't have a capital bond and don't have a good chance of passing one. We know the intent of the light bulb bill was really great (and as an avid outdoors person I applaud this intent), but schools are already experiencing a shortfall and other unfunded mandates like unemployment costs for 10-month staff and FMLA leave for all staff. Our district is currently planning a 13% reduction in force for teachers and admin, which will lead to class sizes jumping about 6 at the primary level and an average of 4-6 at the middle and high level. Unfunded mandates mean fewer teachers for our students in districts that don't have it as part of their bond plans.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Matthew Bell

