

Dear Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Andrea Schmidt, and I am 2nd Grade Teacher at Portland Public Schools. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 3652, which would make class size and caseloads a mandatory subject of collective bargaining in all Oregon schools.

Large class sizes have personally made it difficult for me and many times impossible to teach throughout the day. The demands on teachers and students (district, state and federal mandates) are real. Mental health issues are real and now take center stage in my classroom. One adult in the classroom with students that have various behavioral and academic needs creates high levels of stress for everyone. If I did not make it a daily practice to work on my mental well-being, I would not survive in this profession. But I do not want to survive. I want to thrive so that my students can thrive. Large class sizes inhibit this possibility. Teaching has changed drastically just in the past 5 years and we need to adapt, but large class sizes and inconsistent funding make this impossible.

HB3652 is vital to creating the groundwork to making class size mandates a reality. As someone who has been in education for 30 years and seen an escalation in extreme behaviors in the classroom, class size and classroom support (EAs, para-educators, counselors, social workers) are vital to creating the possibility of success in the classroom. This year I am lucky to have 19 students (I started the year with 23) and am able to give extra support to those whose needs are higher; while I still have students with high behavior needs, I do not have as many as in past years. There is less conflict with less students. Period. Last year was a year with numerous 'room clears' due to aggressive and violent behaviors. The two years prior to that, being able to get through a lesson was extremely difficult. Teacher burnout is real. The job has gotten more, not less, stressful over time. Without the support of friends and family, I would not still be in this profession.

I urge you to support HB 3652. As a longtime educator, it is a 'no brainer.' It is common sense and it is what students, teachers and families want and need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Schmidt
Portland Public Schools