



Date: February 3, 2026

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Enrique Farrera, President Oregon Education Association

Subject: Testimony on SB 1538

My name is Enrique Farrera I am proud to serve as President of the Oregon Education Association which represents over 42,000 educators across the state of Oregon. In my day job I am an Academic Advisor at Clackamas Community College. The Oregon Education Association represents over 42,000 educators across the state of Oregon. The membership of our union spans every aspect of education. We represent educators from pre-kindergarten, K-12 and Community colleges. These members have diverse roles from licensed teachers and specialists, classified/education support professionals (ESPs), community college faculty, bus drivers, school nurses, to counselors and more. In short, our members are the ones who ensure students arrive at school safely, are fed, supported in crisis, teach in front of classrooms, and work in difficult conditions to support students and our communities every day.

OEA appreciates the committee bringing this forward. We have not taken a formal position on this legislation at this time, but we are reviewing it and would like to offer some comments. For those dedicated to Oregon's schools, a student's ability to learn is inseparable from their sense of safety. SB 1538 replaces a patchwork of anxiety with clear, statewide protection. By codifying non-discrimination and establishing uniform protocols for law enforcement requests, we ensure that every student—regardless of their background—can focus on their education rather than their citizenship status

For any school professional, fear is the ultimate barrier to learning. Our primary job is to ensure students feel safe enough to pick up a book or solve a math problem. Currently, the lack of uniform protection regarding immigration status creates a patchwork of anxiety across our districts. Our members—from the bus drivers who greet students at dawn to the teachers who see the empty desks when a family is too afraid to send their child to school—see the chilling effect of immigration enforcement firsthand. Without schools being explicitly defined as safe havens, our members are forced to manage the collective trauma of their classrooms without the clear policy backing they need to protect a student's right to learn.

While Oregon holds strong sanctuary values, federal shifts have left our school communities feeling vulnerable. SB 1538 provides a proactive solution by codifying non-discrimination based on immigration status and requiring district-wide training for all



employees. It ensures that a child's background never determines their level of safety in an Oregon classroom. Section three of the bill also outlines coordination between the Attorney General, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement, and public school professionals.

As we review this legislation it is important we ask the committee to consider if employees are supported by the state, and school district when asked to engage in work that relates to law enforcement and carrying out their duties as outlined in this bill. Protections for school employees should be considered in the final language. This must include ensuring that no district or board shall discipline, suspend, terminate or otherwise punish an employee as designated in this legislation as they comply with these efforts to protect students and educators and provide clear guidance.

We appreciate the values that this bill reflects because they align with OEA's core value of Social Justice: that a democratic society depends on a public education system open and accessible to everyone. We believe the future of all Oregonians must include every child within our boundaries, regardless of citizenship status.