

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Willis Homann, I am the Director of Government Relations and Communications for the Oregon School Employees Association. OSEA represents over 25,000 educators across the state at nearly every level of Oregon's public education system, including K-12 schools, Head Starts, Community Colleges, ESDs and Parks. Our jobs are varied, but our mission is focused: to provide the best possible education for our students. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 1538.

School employees in Oregon and around the country are asking the same question: what are we supposed to do if federal law enforcement shows up at our schools? We hear this from our members across many job classifications. What should a school bus driver do if they are stopped on the road? What should a school secretary do if immigration enforcement is at the door? What should a SPED assistant do if they are outside with their students and ICE approaches? These are burning questions for our school staff. Educators are not in our schools to make a point about the politics of the day - they simply want to do the best job they can for their students, and right now, they are worried about being put in a situation where that might not be possible.

There is still work to be done, but SB 1538 takes the first step towards making sure our school employees are kept informed by having the Attorney General work with partners in our schools to craft model policies around what schools should do if immigration enforcement is at the door. School staff need clear, comprehensive policies that give direction on what to do in a situation that can easily be confusing, overwhelming or even dangerous. This policy must also be communicated with school staff to ensure everyone is on the same page on how to respond. This is doubly true for classified employees in the positions that are most likely to interact with federal agents - such as school bus drivers, front office staff, campus security, crossing guards and playground monitors. Although we were disappointed to see training language removed in the -1 amendment, SB 1538 is a good start to preparing school staff to respond appropriately when these events occur.

OSEA fundamentally believes every child in Oregon deserves the right to an education. Our members work tirelessly every day to ensure that Oregon's children are educated, from pre-K to higher education. Adding immigration or citizenship status to the definition of discrimination would take a firm step forward in ensuring every child in Oregon can get the education they deserve.

More conversations will be needed as Oregon determines the best way to support our students, community and educators. As the model policy develops, we will need take further action to ensure our school staff receive the necessary training and support to carry out their jobs during these unprecedented times. For now, SB 1538 takes a big step forward in the right direction to provide the clarity and knowledge our classified staff need at this very moment, that is why we urge an yes vote on SB 1538.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Willis Homann, OSEA Director of Government Relations and Communications

*The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) is an affiliate of
the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the AFL-CIO.*

