

# CLASS SIZE & CASE LOAD

## A MANDATORY SUBJECT OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR ALL SCHOOLS



LEGISLATIVE  
PRIORITIES

### BACKGROUND

In 2021 the Oregon legislature passed [Senate Bill 580](#), making class size and case load a mandatory subject of collective bargaining in Title 1 schools.

**This 2025 proposal will expand the statute to include all schools.**

#### Public Employee Collective Bargaining Action 101:

The Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA), [ORS 243.650 - 243.806](#), among other things, establishes a collective bargaining and dispute resolution process for Oregon's public employers and unions representing public employees. Through the Act's definition of "employment relations," it distinguishes between the following subjects of bargaining<sup>1</sup>:

- Mandatory. Issues over which the parties must negotiate.
- Permissive. Issues over which the parties may, but are not required to, negotiate.
- Prohibited. Proposals that may not be negotiated at all<sup>2</sup>.

**OREGON HAS  
8<sup>TH</sup> HIGHEST CLASS  
SIZE IN THE NATION  
OREGON'S AVERAGE CLASS  
SIZES ARE AMONG THE  
HIGHEST IN THE COUNTRY,  
ACCORDING TO NCES DATA.**

### PROBLEM AND CORE ISSUE

Despite consistently being named as one of the top issues for both students and community members, class size and case load are not mandatory subjects of collective bargaining in all Oregon schools. This means there is no guarantee that class size and case load will ever be meaningfully discussed at the bargaining table during a contract negotiation.

As a result, discussion on class size and case load can often be delayed or deprioritized during the bargaining process, drawing out the negotiation timeline and delaying resolution on a settled contract.

### THE KEY COMPONENT OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATORS' WORKING CONDITIONS IS CLASS SIZE AND CASE LOAD. WORKING CONDITIONS ARE CENTRAL TO MANDATORY SUBJECTS.

**Excluding class size and case load as a mandatory subject of bargaining for all Oregon schools means that educators cannot insist on negotiations on these subjects**, limiting their ability to advocate for changes that affect both educator work conditions and student outcomes.

Moreover, when district bargaining teams refuse to discuss class size and case load, or attempt to deprioritize the issue during bargaining sessions, the result is often increased tension and frustration between the two bargaining teams. Oregon continues to see an increase in labor disputes driven by management's refusal to engage on the issue of class size and case load.

## **REDUCING CLASS SIZE REMAINS A CORE PRIORITY FOR BOTH THE PUBLIC AND EDUCATORS, AS EVIDENCED BY PUBLIC OPINION POLLING AND OEA SURVEYS. RESEARCH SUPPORTS THEIR CONCERNS AND SPEAKS TO BETTER OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS IN SMALLER CLASSES.**

### **THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR. WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT CLASS SIZE:**

- **Oregon's average class sizes are among the highest in the country** according to NCES data.<sup>3</sup> In 2023 Oregon was ranked 8th highest out of 51 with 43 states and the District of Columbia having fewer students per teacher than Oregon.<sup>4</sup>
- **Oregon's median class size is 22.** Research indicates that children in smaller classes are more successful, both academically and otherwise, particularly in elementary grades, and that class size reduction can be an effective strategy for closing racially or socioeconomically based achievement gaps.<sup>5</sup>
- The largest class size study, the Tennessee's Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) was a four-year longitudinal study that found **smaller class sizes had a positive effect on student learning.**<sup>6</sup> The STAR research shows that small classes (15-17 pupils) in kindergarten through third grade (K-3) provide short- and long-term benefits for students, teachers, and society at large.

### **SOLUTION**

Every child needs and deserves a neighborhood public school with well-prepared educators, class sizes that allow for individualized attention, and enough nurses, counselors, and other support staff to ensure they can thrive. A mandatory discussion on class size ensures a core issue for families and educators will be addressed across the state.

Stop the delays on this critical conversation. Ensure the conversation on class size happens. Help resolve local bargaining earlier.

### **OUR ASK**

**VOTE YES** to make Class Size and Class Load a Mandatory Subject of Collective Bargaining.

#### **What this bill doesn't do:**

- Cost money.
- Require any outcome.

This simply requires the conversation if one party brings it to the bargaining table. There is no required outcome. The bargain and decision-making remain in the locally bargained process.

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## **RESOURCES**

<sup>1</sup>Employment Relations Board Oregon

<sup>2</sup> LERC Monograph Series, Blitz and Joffe. Public Employees and Oregon's Scope of Bargaining.

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. Average public school class size: Average class size in public K-12 schools, by school level, class type, and state: 2020-21 [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/estable/table/ntps/ntps2021\\_sflt07\\_t1s](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/estable/table/ntps/ntps2021_sflt07_t1s)

<sup>4</sup> Rankings of the States 2023 and Estimates of School Statistics 2024, National Education Association. B-3. Students Enrolled Per Teacher in Public Schools

<sup>5</sup> 2 C.M. Achilles, et al, Tennessee's Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) project, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SIWH9F>, Harvard Dataverse, V1, UNF:3:Ji2Q+9HCCZAbw3csOdMNdA== [fileUNF]

<sup>6</sup> 3 Achilles, C.M. et al (2012). Class-size Policy: The Star Experiment and Related Class-size Studies. NCEA Policy Brief, 1.2. 43