

JANEEN SOLLMAN
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 15



OREGON STATE SENATE

June 11, 2025

Obadiah Rutledge
Secretary of the Senate

RE: Vote Explanation for Senate Bill 916 B

Dear Secretary Rutledge,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my opposition on Senate Bill 916 B. I voted no on both the original bill and the concurrence bill and would like to share with you the reasons I did so.

I deeply value the employees across our state that keep our state moving forward. Union jobs provide stable income, benefits and a safety net that is critical to the protection of workers. As a mom of two boys that have union-stable jobs, I am grateful. I have long been a champion of the work performed by our public employees and by our classroom teachers. I did not surprise the advocates or the carrier of the bill with my opposition, I was transparent with my concerns and my ultimate position. As I stated in my floor remarks, honesty is the only way we can move problems through to resolution.

My concerns for SB 916 B during these tumultuous times outweighed the benefits that the advocates stated. SB 916 B boils down to this: DOGE, dollars and disruption. The Trump Administration and the DOGE cuts are causing greater instability in our economy. This will hit our municipalities, counties, and schools the hardest. Tariffs will add further disruption and add considerable costs to current and new projects that our state relies on for infrastructure needs. When some of the advocates stated that there were other states already doing this, that was not quite the full picture. An example is that in 1967 New York passed the Taylor Law, which does not allow public workers to strike at all. This law is still in place. In Washington, public employees are not allowed to strike. No one loves to strike, especially the workers, but when a strike happens within our public sector employees, disruption is felt deep for students, parents, those seeking justice through our courts and the services we rely on every day. With economic instability, our cities and schools may very well not be able to meet the demand for pay increases, as their own budgets will be cut.

For example, if a school district budgets for a 4.5% COLA increase, and the labor negotiated contract establishes a 10% increase, there are no additional funding sources to fill that gap. When districts agree to a contract they can't afford, they must either cut days or cut staff to balance the

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budget. We recently saw an example of this in the Portland Public Schools District who are now facing a \$40 million budget shortfall. Public dollars do not have access to profits. What they have is what they must budget on.

Proponents of SB 916 B have tried to address some of my concerns, ensuring me that in the past 25 years, less than 0.5% of negotiated contracts with school districts have led to strikes. If that is the case, then it seems to me that this bill is a solution looking for a problem. The amendments made to the bill in the House did not alleviate my concerns that this bill will have severe unintended consequences, nor did it alleviate school districts.

Specifically, my concerns were to the impact this legislation could have on Oregon's students and families. I believe that to be a supporter of public employees and classroom teachers is to also support policies that ensure financial stability for our cities, counties, and schools. Unfortunately, there has never been a time in recent memory where that stability is threatened to the extent we are experiencing today with federal dismantling of agencies and withholding of funds. 32% of our state budget, nearly one-third, relies on federal funding. This includes nearly \$1.5 billion in education funding. Across Oregon, including right here in Washington County, which is forecasting a \$20 million deficit this next fiscal year, counties, cities, and schools are scrambling just to maintain current services. Now is not the time to add more uncertainty, and more expenses, which SB 916 would certainly do. When budget cuts happen for our public sectors that means a loss of people, programs and days to serve the public or students.

In a time of federal uncertainty, revenue shortfalls and risky budget setting, I fear SB 916 B is not the answer. For these reasons, I was a no vote on the concurrence.

Sincerely,

Senator Janeen Sollman
Senate District 15