Senate votes to put more money into the classroom

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Pooling of insurance for school employees will mean lower class sizes, restored programs

SALEM - The Oregon Senate on Thursday voted to pass Senate Bill 426, legislation that will establish pooling of insurance benefits for school employees, resulting in cost savings that will go directly into the classroom. The bill is a part of the Senate Democratic Agenda and is a major step in the effort to create more accountability in education funding.

â€œEveryone knows that when it comes to buying benefits for employees, pooling works,â€• said Senator Ryan Deckert (D-Beaverton). â€œThis bill implements a common-sense solution to buying health care benefits that will save school districts money.â€•

Senate Bill 426 will establish the Oregon Educators Benefits Board and allow for the pooling of purchasing power of school districts from around the state when those districts are negotiating health care benefits for employees. This increased purchasing power will create savings that can be sent to the classroom to benefit students.

â€œThe result of this bill will be lower class sizes, updated textbooks and restored programs,â€• said Senator Vicki Walker (D-Eugene). â€œPooling of resources to get a better deal makes sense for our classrooms.â€•

â€œThe pooling approach to buying health care benefits is the industry standard in the private sector,â€• added Deckert. â€œThe State of Oregon should follow this smart financial policy.â€•

Creating insurance pooling power for education is part of the Senate Democratsâ€™ commitment to build strong schools for Oregonâ€™s children. The passage of Senate Bill 426 is part of the plan to ensure accountability in education and find savings before spending.