

My name is Katie Lukins. I am an elementary school teacher in the district currently serving as the BEA Vice President.

I want to begin by addressing the recent announcement regarding a shift in school start times, which will move some schools earlier and others later. For months, we have been calling on the district to prioritize transparency, take accountability, and engage in shared decision-making. Yet once again, a major decision has been made without any meaningful input from the students, families, and educators most directly affected. When decisions are dictated without explanation, context, or collaboration, it continues to feed the narrative that top down leadership takes priority over operating as a community. We cannot build the schools Beaverton deserves unless all stakeholders are brought to the table—not just informed after the fact. It's time for the district to truly listen, share the “why,” and lead with integrity.

I also want to share that BEA licensed substitutes began bargaining their contract this past week, with another session scheduled for this Thursday. We've already come to agreement on a couple articles, and we are hopeful that the district's team will show up with proposals that truly honor the work of our substitutes in Beaverton—educators who step in every day to keep our schools running and our students supported. We are especially looking for movement on wages that will bring our members back in line with what surrounding districts are paying.

Now, turning to an equally urgent issue: On April 3rd, the federal administration sent a memo to all school districts nationwide, demanding that we sign a certification within ten days affirming that we are not violating federal civil rights law by having policies that promote diversity, equity, or inclusion. The threat attached to this directive is staggering—districts that do not comply risk losing essential federal funding, including funds for students with disabilities and students living in poverty.

Let me be clear: We cannot allow ourselves to be pressured into dismantling the very policies that support our most vulnerable students. We cannot retreat from our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These values are not fringe—they are fundamental to providing a public education system that serves every student.

The federal administration has said that “*Federal financial assistance is a privilege, not a right.*” when referring to funds schools receive to support our most vulnerable students. We fundamentally disagree. Education is a right. And the federal government has an obligation to ensure that right is upheld for every student in this country—regardless of their race, their ability, or their socioeconomic status.

This memo isn't just about paperwork—it's about power. It's about who gets to decide what public education looks like, and whose voices are heard. We will not back down. We stand unapologetically with our students. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our communities. We stand strong with our educators. And we stand fiercely against any effort to silence us or dismantle the hard-fought systems we've built to make our schools more just, more inclusive, and more equitable.