

SENATE THIRD READING  
SJR 2 (Cortese and Cervantes)  
As Amended March 27, 2025  
Majority vote

**SUMMARY**

Requests the United States (U.S.) President and U.S. Congress to approve federal legislation guaranteeing certain rights to classified workers that would, among other things, empower those workers to work in a stable, safe environment and receive livable and competitive wages.

**Major Provisions**

- 1) Discuss classified school employees, as generally described below:
  - a) The type of work they perform, including an increase in the demand, and expansion of, their work due to the shortage of teachers;
  - b) The environment in which they work, including concerns regarding stability/job security and workplace safety;
  - c) The level of compensation and deficiency of a living or competitive wage;
  - d) Relegation to less-than full-time employment (although they assume other duties due to the teacher shortage for which they are not commensurately compensated);
  - e) The lack of access to high-quality, affordable health care and retirement due to limited work hours;
  - f) The diversity among this employment segment whom are trusted school community members for parents and pupils, including employees who were raised or attended the schools they serve;
  - g) Systemic barriers to professional growth and development opportunities;
  - h) The need for solutions to address the aforementioned matters by empowering them to provide meaningful input; and,
  - i) The need for, and deserving of, respect, rights, and dignity, as these employees are essential to creating and maintaining safe and supportive school environments that are conducive to pupils learning and thriving.
- 2) As generally described below, resolve that classified workers have certain rights to:
  - a) Be entitled to 16 weeks of paid family and medical leave;
  - b) Have paid leave for all planned and unforeseen school closures, professional development days, and other short-term closures;
  - c) Have access to free or affordable professional growth and development opportunities during regular, paid working hours towards career advancement;

- d) Be given resources and supplies to enable them to effectively and efficiently perform their duties;
  - e) Have access to training and appropriate personal protective equipment;
  - f) Have representation in organizations that determine policies affecting working conditions;
  - g) Receive notification and be able to provide input regarding the use of electronic/technological advances in their workplaces, including training as to those technologies;
  - h) Have adequate notice and opportunity to participate in individualized education program, behavioral, and other similar meeting relating to their support of pupils;
  - i) Experience a safe, healthy, and appropriately staffed work environment;
  - j) Receive adequate notification regarding the duration of employment;
  - k) Have employment contracts, including provisions for automatic renewal of the contract at expiration, rather than automatic contract termination at contract expiration, among other provisions;
  - l) Have a process for reporting workplace issues and concerns to their employer that protects employees from retaliation; and,
  - m) In recognition of the importance of collective bargaining in maintaining good working conditions, employers of these employees should engage in good faith negotiations, strive to reach timely and just contracts that fairly compensate and protect classified workers, prevent scabs from replacing classified workers engaged in a strike, and refrain from locking out classified workers.
- 3) Urge the U.S. President and the U.S. Congress to approve federal legislation guaranteeing the aforementioned rights.

## **COMMENTS**

### *Classified Employees: Who They Are and What They Do*

Generally, classified employees in the state's public education system are those who are not required to hold certain certification qualifications, but provide custodial and maintenance, transportation, office and technical support, food service, and school safety services to students. Individuals in this classification provide basic needs, and help to maintain the social and emotional support of students in school districts. These employees help to keep students safe and schools operational. In some instances, classified employees also may serve as paraeducators where students may require personalized educational support while the paraeducator is under the tutelage of a certificated employee (i.e., teacher).

However, many of these workers face challenges such as low wages, limited access to healthcare and retirement benefits, unpredictable work hours, and take on additional responsibilities due to staffing shortages, but may not receive compensation that reflects their contributions. Workplace conditions can also pose risks, with some employees lacking sufficient training, professional development opportunities, or access to necessary resources.\

This resolution resolves to recognize their contribution to the educational setting and to address systemic employment-related issues.

### **According to the Author**

"By urging federal action, this resolution aims to elevate the rights and working conditions of classified school employees, ensuring they receive the respect, compensation, and protections they deserve."

### **Arguments in Support**

The California Federation of Teachers, a Union of Educators and Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO states in part, that, "[d]espite the critical nature of their work, classified employees are often not treated with the respect they deserve. Low wages, inadequate benefits, unsafe conditions, and insufficient hours remain all too common, greatly complicating our ability to recruit and retain qualified workers. As a result, existing classified workers face overwork and a growing inability to reliably provide for their families. But the burden of understaffing falls beyond classified workers. Teachers and volunteers must assume additional duties when classified positions are left unfilled, and students find school a less attractive place to be when buildings aren't properly maintained. The end result is overworked teachers, frustrated volunteers, and less motivated students. Clearly, we must do more to improve the wages, benefits, and working conditions for classified workers while also focusing on our attention on adequate staffing and proper supports for these essential employees. [This resolution] explicitly identifies a variety of time-tested solutions to these concerns and puts the legislature on record supporting these reforms. From living wages and paid family leave to professional development and adequate training, this resolution lists many options for policymakers to consider when addressing the crises facing our classified workers."

Other supporters offer similar statements regarding this resolution.

### **Arguments in Opposition**

None on file.

## **FISCAL COMMENTS**

This resolution is keyed nonfiscal by Legislative Counsel.

## **VOTES**

### **SENATE FLOOR: 29-7-4**

**YES:** Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Hurtado, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

**NO:** Alvarado-Gil, Choi, Grove, Jones, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Seyarto

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Dahle, Reyes, Strickland, Valladares

**ASM PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT: 5-0-2**

**YES:** McKinnor, Boerner, Elhawary, Garcia, Nguyen

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Lackey, Alanis

**UPDATED**

VERSION: March 27, 2025

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FN: 0001019