

2009 Regular Legislative Session
FISCAL ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION
Prepared by the Oregon Legislative Fiscal Office

MEASURE NUMBER: SB 767

STATUS: C-Engrossed

SUBJECT: Online learning through virtual charter schools

GOVERNMENT UNIT AFFECTED: Department of Education, local education agencies, Legislative Administration

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REVIEWED BY: Monica Brown, Daron Hill

DATE: June 17, 2009

	<u>2009-2011</u>	<u>2011-2013</u>
EXPENDITURES: See analysis		

EFFECTIVE DATE: On passage

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANDATE: This bill does not affect local governments' service levels or shared revenues sufficient to trigger Section 15, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution.

ANALYSIS: The measure places a moratorium on chartering virtual public charter schools that would be established after this measure becomes effective, increasing the number of students to which online instruction is provided by a virtual charter school, and state board waivers for a virtual public charter school. The measure allows virtual public charter schools to continue existing contracts until the expiration of the contracts. The measure specifies the applicability of the 50 percent residency requirement to all public charter school operating prior to, on or after the effective date of the measure unless the school has been granted a waiver by the State Board of Education. The measure repeals the moratorium on July 1, 2011. The measure defines a virtual public charter school and places additional requirements on the operation and accountability of virtual public charter schools. The measure specifies that regardless of the 50% residency requirement a virtual public charter school can operate until July 1, 2011 with students who are enrolled in the school on May 1, 2009. This provision basically provides virtual public charter schools with about two years to come into compliance with ORS 338.125 (2)(b).

The measure establishes a seventeen-member Online Learning Task Force for the purpose of ensuring that this state provides appropriate access to online learning through public charter schools. The task force is charged with preparing a report that addresses several issues related to public online instruction through public charter schools. The task force shall submit a work plan that describes the activities of the task force not later than September 1, 2009. The Legislative Administrator is allowed to employ staff that is necessary to support the task force; however the task force is directed to utilize the services of permanent legislative staff to the greatest extent possible. The task force shall submit its report to the legislative education committees not later than December 15, 2009. The task force is repealed on the date of the convening of the next regular biennial legislative session.

There is an indeterminate fiscal impact to virtual public charter schools. Currently there are two virtual public charter schools that operate statewide in Oregon: the Connections Academy (ORCA) and the Oregon Virtual Academy (ORVA). One virtual public charter school, the West Lane Technology Learning Center is not operated on a statewide basis. The two schools that are operated on a statewide basis have a combined enrollment of approximately 2,200 students for the 2008-09 school year.

Currently, these schools do not meet the requirement that 50 percent or more of the students who attend the school reside in the school district where the public charter school is located. The 50% residency waiver was approved for ORVA in June 2008 and it sunsets on July 1, 2010. ORCA submitted a waiver request on the 50% residency requirement beginning with the school year starting July 1, 2010 when the school expected to operate under a renewed charter with the Scio School District (current waiver ends with the current charter). The state board voted in February to delay action on the request, and has not taken the issue up since that time. This measure would impact the two statewide virtual public charter schools currently in existence. The two existing virtual charter schools would need to comply with all of the new requirements outlined in the bill to continue after July 1, 2011. The costs to virtual charter schools to comply with the requirements of this measure are unknown.

There is an indeterminate fiscal impact to school districts. Students currently enrolled in virtual public charter schools will be reintegrated into schools within their home districts upon closure of the schools. Approximately ten percent of the students enrolled in ORCA have individual education plans (IEP). Although the funding for these students would transfer to the student's home district, there may be services that these students require that the school districts would have to pay for that is not included in the double-weight formula that the district would receive. For example, there are students who are enrolled in the virtual public charter schools who have medical needs and could potentially require a school district to meet certain conditions on campus at the expense of the district. It is not known to what extent the expenses associated with these students will exceed the funding provided to the districts.

ODE anticipates a minimal fiscal impact as a result of providing the task force with information and implementing new rules that will be applicable to online charter schools. ODE reports that information sharing and rule-writing can be accomplished within its existing resources.

Legislative Administration anticipates a fiscal impact as a result of providing staff support to the task force. Legislators who participate in the task force are eligible to receive per diem and mileage reimbursement for attending meetings of the task force. The Legislative Assembly budget contains funding for the participation of legislators in interim meetings. Legislative Administration reports that the average cost per member to attend a meeting is \$167 per day. If the task force meets four times the cost to the Legislative Assembly will be \$4,008. Legislative Administration will use current staff to provide support to the task force, however if additional staff are necessary, the cost would be \$37,746 for one Committee Administrator (0.13 FTE) and one Committee Assistant (0.13 FTE). This estimate is based on one-half of a Committee Administrator and Committee Assistant's time for a six-month period. If the cumulative effect of the enactment of other bills exceeds expenditure levels assumed in Legislative Administration's budget, Legislative Administration may need to seek additional resources.