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House Education Committee
March 22, 2013
Testimony on House Bill 2150

Chair Gelser and members of the committee, for the record I am Cindy Hunt, Government and Legal Affairs Manager for the Oregon Department of Education. I am here today to testify on HB 2150.

HB 2150 is a re-write of a 2011 bill, SB 255. The bill is the result of a collaborative process that included a diverse group of education stakeholders. It adds clarity and improves legal processes relating to public charter schools.

Oregon's charter school law is now 14 years old. Since the law's adoption, Oregon has seen a steady growth in its charter schools each year. Today Oregon has 123 charter schools with new schools opening each year.

The Department of Education appreciates the Oregon School Boards Association for convening the 2011 charter school workgroup to review Oregon's charter school laws. We also appreciate the participation of, and collaborative approach taken, by other workgroup members in providing information to the workgroup and making recommendations to improve Oregon's charter school laws.

HB 2150, which is the product of that 2011 workgroup, addresses many of the issues that have arisen as the charter law has matured in Oregon. The amendments to current law that are in HB 2150 are the result of the unanimous consent of the committee members.

The workgroup also discussed other issues relating to charter schools not contained in HB 2150. After the work group adjourned, ODE continued to work with members of the work group, district sponsors, and charter schools to address some of these issues. For example, the work group discussed the trend of small single-school districts converting their school to a charter school and the issues that are specific to these types of schools. In 2011, ODE partnered with the Umatilla Morrow Education Service District and OSBA to provide a seminar specifically for these types of charter schools in the northeastern corner of our state. In 2012, ODE conducted 6 webinars with charter schools and sponsors districts on such topics as public meetings, public records, PERS, special education, audits and educator licensure. In February, 2013, ODE convened a one day virtual charter school summit so that the schools and sponsor districts could share best practices and areas of concern. ODE has also presents annually at OSBA and COSA conferences on charter schools.

I'm happy to answer any questions about the bill or the process used to develop it.