



From the Desk of
Rep. Margaret Doherty

Margaret Doherty

Please Vote to Concur on Senate Amendments to HB 3093B

Financial Accountability for Charter Schools

HB 3093B is a bill to ensure that school districts and taxpayers will never again experience the grave financial misdeeds that occurred a few years ago here, when an unscrupulous charter operator committed significant and costly financial and legal torts against sponsoring school districts and the State of Oregon. That case is now making its way through the Marion County criminal court process.

By ensuring that annual audits are submitted in a timely fashion and that financial management systems are in place to ensure the stability of charter schools, problems will be detected much more quickly in the future. Thank you, House Members, for your support of this bill some weeks ago.

As you originally passed it, this bill allowed for charter schools to be closed if audits were not submitted in a timely fashion. A work group was formed to address concerns with this version, and OEA was pleased to contribute to the group's problem solving. As amended by the Senate Education and Workforce Committee, HB 3093B now allows a 90-day grace period beyond the deadline for submission of audits and also offers charter schools the opportunity to correct financial management deficiencies.

The Senate Committee also softened the sanctions for non-submission by allowing for temporary suspension of State School Fund payments in addition to extending a grace period. Additionally, the Department of Education and the Oregon School Boards Association have agreed to publish lists of auditors who are willing to take on small clients for this work, so that audits are not submitted late due to inability to find qualified personnel to do the work. Finally, language was added to enable virtual vendors on contract with charter schools to hire administrators directly as private employees.

OEA believes that HB 3093B will help to resolve honest difficulties in a fair way and yet still provide an early look at the indicators that might otherwise result in fiscal malfeasance if not caught early. For these reasons, we ask for your support for this common-sense legislation and your "AYE" vote for concurrence.