

I am testifying against SB 1538.

Passing this bill is tantamount to allowing the General Motors Chevrolet division the power to control the sales of Fords, Toyotas, and BMW in Portland, Oregon. The result would be a Chevy monopoly. Chevys are good cars, but they don't fill everyone's needs and, given a choice, many people would not choose Chevrolets. And once the monopoly was in place, the quality of Chevys would decline and the price of Chevys would go up. Monopolies always produce the poorest quality at the highest possible price because their customers are trapped. Do we really want to trap our parents and students in increasingly costly and inferior schools?

Yes, the school district's power would be exercised by setting educationally relevant goals – goals that the school district itself may be no where near achieving. Should Chevrolet be allowed to impose a 90 mile/gallon requirement on Toyota?

It is noteworthy that this bill was drafted at the request of the Portland Public School District and that these powers are granted the school district only when there are three or more charter schools in the district and charter schools have attracted 3% of the students. The Portland Public School District has consistently erected barriers to school choice and judging by the performance of our inner city public schools, the Portland School District is most in need of educational alternatives for its most at-risk students.

Portland would be far better encouraging public charter schools with proven track records like KIPP and Harlem Success Academy. Instead of welcoming high achieving public charter schools, the Portland Public School District has denied its parents and students such choices.

As a Lewis and Clark faculty member I taught excellent students who had been educated in charter schools and several of my students went on to teach in charter schools. One student, a Pamplin Scholar of Hispanic descent, has been teaching mathematics for six years in a charter

school on the Texas/Mexican border. Her students are virtually all poor, but the school graduates 96% of its students and virtually all of them are accepted into colleges. The school has been designed to fit the educational needs of these students, and it does so superbly. There is a 14,000 student waiting list for that school. Poor parents in Texas know they need more and not less such schools. No rational person would choose to limit such schools to 3% of the school population as this bill proposes to do. Louisiana, New York, and Massachusetts have many such schools. Portland students need such choices.

The Portland Public School District seems determined to deny many of our most “disadvantaged” students the choice of an education that fits their needs.

Please vote against SB 1538.

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