

February 17, 2014

To: House Committee on Education
Re: SB 1538A

I am writing to urge you to vote NO AGAINST SB 1538A.

SB 1538 will deal a critical blow to charter schools in Oregon. Charter schools provide alternatives for parents and their students. They also create mini-experiments in alternative approaches to education. This is the kind of innovation that our country needs to raise our disappointing K-12 outcomes. Charter schools, in Oregon, already have unreasonable constraints and should not be constrained further, as those entrenched in the current system would like. Schools are to serve the tax paying parents and their children, not teachers, their union representatives, or school administrators.

I am struck by the duplicity of the amendment to SB 1538A that states in Section 4 (3)(b):

“For any year of operation of a public charter school, the public charter school may give priority for admission to students who have historically been underserved due to race ethnicity, students in low-income households or English language learner students.”

This suggests that the writers of the bill believe either that charter schools could do a better job with this population OR that teachers and administrators of regular public schools would rather not deal with this group of students. According to many measures, United States public education produces inferior outcomes to those of other developed countries and Oregon public education ranks low among US states. Certainly, this low ranking is not due solely to “underserved” students. Other, more privileged students are also performing poorly. If writers of this bill believe charter schools could better serve the “underserved”, why would they not also believe charter schools could better serve the other students.

Parents put their children in charter schools voluntarily to provide them with education that will meet their needs. There are parents who wished they had such an opportunity but for the strong limitations on charter school supply.

Please do not further constrain charter schools in Oregon. Please vote NO against SB 1538A.

Thank you for your consideration,

Susan Pozdena
Former teacher and parent of two former Beaverton School District students