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Chelle Robins



A State of Oregon Sponsored Public Charter School

February 19, 2014

Dear Members of the House Education Committee

Please consider this written testimony when discussing SB 1538A.

Four Rivers Community School is a dual language (DL) charter school located in Ontario, Oregon. We are a K-8 school with 255 students. We are graduating approximately 25 students a year and 85% have 12-24 college credits upon completion of 8th grade. Our program has been very successful, but for our program to continue with a DL model it is essential for us to have a weighted lottery. By research design, DL programs must have a 50/50 split between the languages. This is a common practice among traditional, district-operated public schools with DL programs; fifty percent of the seats are filled with native English speakers and the remaining fifty percent of the seats are filled with students with the target language. Without having a language balance, students do not have models to learn from and communicate with. This is a weakness in our program and has been noted by Dr. Kathryn Lindholm-Leary and Rosa Molina, dual language consultants. As a school we have struggled to maintain this balance and out of our 11 operating years we have only had one year where we had a 50/50 split. In fact, as the years have progressed, the trend has shown that we receive twice as many English applications as we do Spanish. This year only 5 of our 26 kindergarteners speak Spanish. We have tried many different marketing strategies to correct and equalize this concern, but it really is about access.

We have been working with ODE for the past 11 years to address this concern, but the change must take place at the legislative level. Please allow us the same equitable lottery process that is used by other public dual language schools in Oregon and across the nation. Section 4 of SB 1538A allows this. Without this section, without this policy provision, SB 1538 is, at best, a bill in search of a non-existent problem.

Thank you for your consideration,

Chelle Robins

Executive Director