



**THE EMERSON
SCHOOL**

105 NW Park Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97209
503-525-6124
www.emersonschool.org

**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

Sarah Andersen
President

Tara O'Neil
Vice President

Ben Lauritsen
Co-Secretary

Sheryl Reinisch
Co-Secretary

Brian Detman

Todd Diskin

Jo Sigmund

*The Emerson School is a
501.c.3 tax-exempt
organization.*

February 19, 2014

To the Members of the House Education Committee:

Please consider this written testimony regarding SB1538A.

I urge you to support Section 4 of SB1538A, included to allow charter schools to increase access to educational options by historically underserved minorities. Without approval of Section 4, SB1538A is a bill looking to solve a problem that doesn't exist.

The Emerson School is a K-5 small charter school located in downtown Portland, serving 144 students from all quadrants of the Portland Public School District. Emerson consistently receives the highest rating on the Oregon Report Card, and Emerson's students consistently exceed District and State averages on all benchmark assessments. Emerson is not in a residential neighborhood, has no access to District school bus service, and parents must pay downtown parking fees to drop children off and pick them up at this public school. While these conditions can be off-putting when compared to the convenience of a neighborhood school, there are generally 300 applicants for 15-20 annual openings.

Given the odds of admission can be 20:1, and the application rate is historically disproportionately low from underserved minorities (due mainly to access and transportation issues), the blind lottery often results in less than equitable enrollment demographics. The ability to reserve some of our openings for historically underserved minorities is essential to ensuring this excellent educational option is equally accessible to everyone in our District. While specific recruitment efforts and outreach can have some impact on the lottery pool, the odds are still stacked against historically underserved minorities without legislative action that allows charter schools to reserve some spots for those students. Section 4 of SB1538A would allow this. Without Section 4, SB1538A is a bill without a problem to address; all the other provisions of this bill are already addressed in current charter school law.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tara O'Neil
School Administrator