

Chair Gelser and members of the committee:

My name is Kristen Miles and I am the Director of Charter Schools for Portland Public Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about SB 1538-A. The objective of this bill is to allow districts who are already well-versed in charter school sponsorship the ability to focus their incoming applications to their stated student achievement goals. Its purpose is not to limit charter school applications, but to create an additional avenue for serving the greatest needs of the district through the innovation of charter schools.

Currently, districts must evaluate each charter school application it receives on its own merits. That is, if a charter school application meets the criteria stated in ORS 338, the Board should approve the application, regardless of how many other qualified applications it receives that year, regardless of whether or not the application meets the current educational goals and objectives of the district.

SB 1538-A would do the following:

- It would allow a district having more than 3% of its students enrolled in brick-and-mortar charter schools located in the district AND 3 or more brick-and-mortar charter schools sponsored by the district to amend its application process to consider only proposal that intentionally address one or more school board-adopted educational goals. In other words, a district with 3% or more of its students in charter schools (that are not virtual charter schools) AND three or more charter schools (that are not virtual charter schools) would have the option to create an alternative application process whereby the district would only be obligated to review charter school applications that aligned with the district's stated educational goals. School district boards would set these goals biennially – but review them annually – and would be required to submit the goals to the State Board of Education.
- The district would then be allowed to rank applications not only on their own merits, but against each other, so that, for example, a district receiving 4 applications in a year (as PPS generally does) might decide to approve only the top one or two at its discretion.
- Any stated an publicized district educational goal that a charter applicant seeks to address would be an element of the charter application, and progress toward advancement of this goal would also be a factor considered in future charter renewals is the charter application were approved.
- While this alternate application process may only be implemented in the case where a district has more than 3% of its students in brick-and-mortar charter schools AND sponsors 3 or more brick-and-mortar charter schools, it would not be mandatory. That is, nothing in this bill would prevent a qualifying district from choosing not to opt in to this alternate application model.

SB 1538-A does not, however, allow districts to opt out of reviewing any charter school applications or allow them to set unattainable goals in order to discourage applications altogether. The intent is to increase local control by simply using one of the most flexible and innovative schools models we have to serve our students' greatest needs. Each school district knows best what these needs are, and should be afforded the flexibility to be just as innovative in serving them.

The new process will not affect existing charter schools, nor will it impact them when they come up for renewal. Additionally, should a district's charter school enrollment fall below the 3% threshold in any given year, or should the district sponsor fewer than 3 charter schools in a given year, that district would default back to the current charter application process for each year that it did not meet the criteria for this new process.

Thank you for your time.

Kristen Miles
Program Director, Charter Schools
Portland Public Schools