



HB 3151: Virtual Charter School Sponsorship

Creating appropriate accountability and oversight of large, state-wide public virtual charter schools.

Bill Summary

Requires that when a virtual charter school reaches a specific threshold of student enrollment as it relates to its sponsoring district, the charter is transferred to the State Board of Education for direct state sponsorship.

Issue

Currently, virtual charter schools that operate essentially as statewide schools can seek and gain sponsorship from any school district in Oregon. As the virtual charter school system in Oregon has matured it has become apparent that this has created a situation that places school districts in an inappropriate position of oversight with large statewide charter schools. This serves to undermine a necessary degree of accountability for what is essentially a statewide service delivery model. In some cases this has even lead to school districts being put in the position of “bidding” for sponsorship of these charter schools by promising an increasingly greater allocation of funding to the charter school and an increasingly less amount of funding for oversight by the sponsoring school districts.

Policy Change

As a way of recognizing that there is a difference between large statewide virtual charter schools and that students in these charter schools deserve and benefit from effective oversight and accountability, HB 3151 proposes to shift sponsorship of virtual charter schools that reach a significant size from the local school district to the state.

Thus, for virtual charter schools that have a student enrollment greater than 100% of the enrollment of the sponsoring school district, the charter would transfer from the local district to the state for the ensuing year of operation. This will allow the state to take on the responsibility for oversight.

Process

- If a virtual charter school’s enrollment, based on December average daily membership, exceeds the enrollment of the sponsoring school district, the sponsorship of the virtual charter school shall transfer to the State Board of Education (SBE).
- In order to accomplish this, a two step process would take place:
 - On June 30 of the year in which the enrollment limit is triggered the charter terminates and transfers to the SBE, then;
 - The charter school and the SBE enter into a new charter and contract for operation.
- HB 3151 further clarifies that the state charter should be, “to the extent possible”, merely a continuation of the existing local charter. This would not, however, prevent the state from entering into negotiation on any element of the charter and would still require negotiation of a new contract for operation.