



**Carla C. Piluso**  
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Date: May 15, 2015  
To: Co-Chairs Girod & Read and Committee Members  
Joint Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Capital Construction  
From: Carla C. Piluso, Representative, House District 50  
Regarding: Open School

Good afternoon, Co-Chairs Girod and Read, and members of the Joint Committee on Capital Construction. For the record, my name is Carla C. Piluso and I am the Representative from House District 50, site of the future home of the Open School in Rockwood.

I am here to speak on behalf of the Open School project, to secure \$2 million in lottery bonds for a facility in the Rockwood neighborhood. To understand the extreme need for the Open School, we must first share a bit about the situation of youth and their families living in Rockwood, and much of east Multnomah County.

Over the last 10 years, gentrification has aggressively pushed poverty into east Multnomah County. 25 percent of Rockwood families live in poverty, compared to 10 percent over all in the state. Rockwood families are twice as likely to receive state food assistance compared to other Oregon families, and unemployment rates in East County are 5 percent higher than statewide unemployment numbers.

With the largest concentration of youth under the age of 18 within the metro region, Rockwood has led the State for the lowest academic performance and graduation rates. In one the school districts serving East County youth, 57.9 percent of students are on track to graduate on time compared to the national average of 80 percent. This area has the largest incidences of crime in the entire state.

The Open School will be a transformational investment in this community. This innovative partnership with six school districts (Gresham-Barlow, Centennial, David Douglas, Parkrose, Portland Public Schools and Reynolds) and the University of Portland's School of Education is reinventing how we educate and prepare youth for college and the workforce. The school will serve kids who are furthest behind, students with a 75 percent probability of dropping out of traditional school.

The Open School campus and the Boys and Girls Club Rockwood have also formed a unique partnership that will maximize the space on site and provide high-risk students with an easy transition to a safe after-school program.

In the law enforcement and education communities, we know that the most effective programs in promoting positive life-outcomes for youth are administered in their community. The impacts felt from this school, however, will reach far beyond east Multnomah County. By making this investment now, we can improve the educational and public safety outcomes for this area, and better prepare the youth who attend Open School for future success and self-sufficiency.

The Open School will provide a growth of support, knowledge, self-esteem and positive role modeling, and we will have children and teens that will be far less likely to be suspects of or victims of crime. That is crime prevention at its finest.

I believe, actually I know, the addition of the Open School will be the catalyst for needed change and tip the scale for the re-birth of the Rockwood. It will be the anchor for change and prosperity of East County and will help our state reach important goals, like 40-40-20.

In closing, we are lucky to have the Executive Director of Open School, Andrew Mason, here today, as well as an Open School graduate, and Josh Fuhrer who is the Executive Director of the Gresham Redevelopment Commission. They will address the specifics of the plans for the facility, their funding needs, and collectively answer any questions you have. I also hope you all will take a look at the letter uploaded to OLIS, a group of sixteen Representatives and Senators have signed on in support of the Open School.

Thank you, Co-Chairs Girod and Read, and members of the committee, I urge you to support the Open School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carla C. Piluso', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Carla C. Piluso  
Representative, HD 50