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Dear State Board of Education Directors

In October of 2015, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) recommended that you approve the charter expansion for Four Rivers Community School (FRCS). Based on the information provided, the State Board of Education (SBE) took action to approve a substantial modification to the FRCS recently granted ten year charter. It has been well documented by Ontario School District (OSD) officials, and the outside investigator hired by ODE, that the recommendation that came before you was fraught with a multitude of problems. Most importantly, there was no cohesive plan for creating a 9-12 program on the part of FRCS and there was a complete lack of consideration for the impact to the local school district, OSD. At the time of your approval there was no approved plan for the implementation of a high school. FRCS had no description of the program, no anticipated student counts, no adequate facilities, no plan for offering a comprehensive high school education, no plan for offering co-curricular activities, no plan for offering sports, no plan for transporting students, and no plan for feeding students. In fact, an approvable plan was not submitted until late in the summer of 2016.

The SBE takes on a tremendous responsibility when they agree to sponsor a charter school that has been denied sponsorship by a local school district. At a minimum there is an expectation that the state sponsorship will ensure a charter school will operate within the confines of the regulations governing all schools in Oregon and that the existence of the school or modifications to the school will not create additional harm to the local district. ODE and the SBE have a responsibility for thoroughly evaluating whether the benefits of a charter school are outweighed by the negative impacts said charter school may have on the quality of education of the students at large within a district. When the SBE approved the expansion of FRCS they did so based on bad information and unknowingly caused harm to high school students in Ontario. Because you, as a board, would not intentionally harm the students or districts you are elected to represent, it is critical that the decision to allow FRCS to expand into high school be rescinded.

In our earlier testimony we spoke to you about the negative impact the creation of a second high school within the Ontario District would have. I would like to re-iterate the dire consequences that your action will have on OSD, the Malheur ESD, and surrounding districts if FRCS is allowed

to fully implement their high school. I believe you received letters that indicate the potential consequences from other local officials representing CTE programs and the ESD partnership.

Let me be clear about the specific areas where irreparable damage will be done. The impact FRCS has on the OSD is unlike the impacts other state sponsored charter schools have on larger school districts. With only 11,000 residents, Ontario has a limited number of high school age students (750). As the SBE is aware, economies of scale play a major role in the financing and funding of public education. If allowed to fully roll out all grades 9-12 with each grade enrolling 30+ students it would represent a 16% loss in enrollment to OHS. Compare this situation to other charter schools where the percentage of students diverted out of the public school system is a much lower percentage (less than 1% in most cases). Loss of enrollment equals a loss of funding and consequently a loss of programs and staff.

In the present case, the expansion of FRCS to include grades 9 through 12 will result in an estimated million dollars out of a total budget of \$2,500,000 (based on ADMw calculations). This is roughly 36% of the entire instructional budget for Ontario High School being redistributed to FRCS. This will create a significant financial hardship for OSD. The reduced funding will have to be made up by various measures which could include:

- Staff reductions
 - Licensed and classified
- Reductions to programs
 - STEM- Project Lead the Way
 - Arts- Fewer elective offerings
 - Co-curricular programs
 - Athletics
- Changes to local partnerships
 - Malheur ESD
 - Poverty To Prosperity's Treasure Valley Tech programs (welding, automated systems, nursing)
 - College credit opportunities

In reading the information provided to you today by ODE, it appears they would have you believe that they will come into Ontario and make certain that we all work together for the betterment of all children in Ontario. The OSD SB and district officials do not believe this is possible. The OSD offered repeatedly to re-engage in conversations with the local charter school prior to the start of the school year (see letter dated April 22, 2016 from OSD SB to FRCS SB). Given the divide that been created by FRCS negative campaigning and legal and departmental complaints, the likelihood of future productive partnerships between OSD and the current leadership at FRCS is virtually non-existent. This does not even take into account the competitive relationship which will be required if OSD and FRCS become opponents vying for high school enrollment from the limited number of students within the district.

Furthermore, OSD has little confidence in the abilities of ODE staff to influence decisions made by FRCS (see letter from ODE to FRCS requesting that they not start the high school program dated August 15, 2016 which was reportedly a follow-up from a verbal request in the Spring of 2016). FRCS has shown a propensity for ignoring strong recommendations from ODE with no consequence. Over time, ODE staff has shown neither the capacity nor concern for representing the interests of OSD in regards to the operations of FRCS. ODE staff clearly had no sympathy for OSD when recommending the modification/ expansion with minimal regard to the obvious impact it would have. ODE does not have the authority, staffing, nor expertise to remedy the damage that will have been done if FRCS' high school expansion is not overturned.

You, the SBE upon recommendation by ODE, have essentially created the 198th school district in the state of Oregon. This has resulted in wasteful redundancies including, but not limited to, diverting educational funds to an additional superintendent at FRCS in an area with relatively few students. Many would argue in our small conservative town with significant poverty that having two educational "executives" is a waste of valuable resources. Other redundancies include core teaching staff whom OSD employs, CTE and STEM offerings (that FRCS has indicated they would like to add), advanced Spanish classes and a far more robust and comprehensive expanded list of elective and college credit options to students. As it would turn out FRCS high school is not offering anything that is not already offered or being considered by Ontario High School. OSD asks that if you determine that it is the right thing to do to add the 198th district that you take appropriate action to also require that FRCS manage all aspects of a comprehensive educational program.... This includes transportation, food services, fiscal management, special education, federal programs, and assessment.

OSD stands ready to serve all high school students in the Ontario area by continuing to expand programs and offerings. We strongly desire to continue partnerships with the local ESD and the Poverty to Prosperity group. Your decision on the issue before you will impact our ability to do so significantly. As the largest district in our area, the financial and political support of OSD are critical to the success of both of these entities. If OSD suffers the projected financial impact of the fully implemented FRCS high school we will be unable to contribute to these innovative institutions and will see significant deterioration of the improvements we have been working to institute over the past seven years.

We ask today that you take a stand to revoke the critical decision that you made last October without adequate information. The Board, staff, students, and parents of students at OHS are relying upon you to insist upon adequate information to make informed decisions and will not relent in our pursuit to avoid the hardship that the formation of another high school in Ontario will cause.

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