



Please Oppose LC 76 - Now Is Not The Time To Increase the Online Charter School Cap to 8%

Co-Chair Courtney, Co-Chair Kotek, and members of the Committee on Special Session:

The Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) and Coalition of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) urge your opposition to LC 76. Increasing the cap for Virtual Online Charter Schools to 8% will transfer resources from neighborhood community schools to online charters at a time of great uncertainty for Oregon's K-12 system and our students.

Right now, school districts across Oregon are planning for the next school year without funding certainty for the State School Fund, Measure 98, and the Student Success Act. Oregon's school budgets are already experiencing increased costs and some estimates are that schools will need an additional \$200-300 million next year to keep our students, staff, and families safe until there is a cure for COVID-19. In short, the coming school year is likely to be the most complicated and expensive in Oregon's history while our budgets will likely be inadequate.

LC 76 may result in the transfer of hundreds of millions of dollars from neighborhood schools and local communities to online charters. The resulting cuts to school days, larger class sizes, and lost programs in local communities are hardest on our historically underserved students, students of color, homeless students, and students navigating poverty. Coronavirus related school closures have intensified and shone a spotlight on the inequities in our communities and schools. We all have a responsibility to ensure that we don't lose the momentum we've gained over the past year to serve students with an equity focus through the Student Success Act. We believe that this proposal will exacerbate rather than alleviate the inequities experienced by our students.

Raising the cap to 8% would allow almost 30,000 additional students to enroll in online charters during the 2020-21 school year and beyond. Consider that every single school district and education service district must adopt a budget by June 30th. They are approving those budgets with faith that the Governor and the Legislature will not cut school budgets next year. And unlike online schools, our neighborhood schools have fixed costs that do not go away if we lose students. If LC 76 were to become law, those districts could see their budgets ravaged and left to scramble to provide students services with fewer resources.

Unfortunately, the topic of online charter schools has been politicized in Oregon. Our organizations are supportive of Oregon's charter schools and their role in our public school system. But we also believe that any changes to the current law, including raising the cap on virtual online schools, needs a full public debate so that legislators and policymakers fully understand the ramifications for all students when changes are made. Without such a discussion and deep analysis of both the outcomes of online charter schools and an understanding of which students they serve, we believe the consequences of such a major change in policy in the middle of a pandemic will only serve to add additional chaos to the next school year while moving our state backwards on equity. We urge you to not pass LC 76.