

TO: Joint Committee on Student Success  
FROM: Tom Cole, CEO – Kids Unlimited  
RE: Student Success Act  
DATE: April 16, 2019

Co-chairs Roblan and Smith-Warner and members of the committee,

My name is Tom Cole and I am CEO of Kids Unlimited. One of our most important programs is our Kids Unlimited Academy, a public charter school serving students in Medford, Oregon. I am writing to support the work of the Joint Committee as it seeks to put in place the single biggest investment ever to be made in Oregon's education system. Schools, students, and communities across the state are excited about this historic investment and the ways it will help us better support students achieve success. Unfortunately, too often Oregon's public charter school students are left out of conversations about targeted investments and policies to support the success of all students. Our school represents the most vulnerable students in our region with 100% of our students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Over 80% of our students are Latino, 54% are English Learners with nearly a third of our students represented as migrant. On behalf of the hundreds of kids and families we serve, I want to thank you for ensuring that public charter school students are included in the new investments made with the Student Success Act and its School Improvement Account.

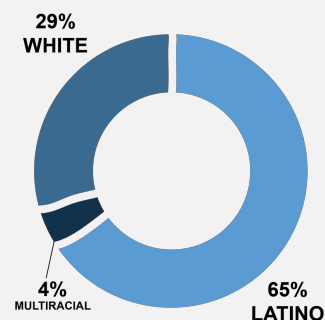
Our school empowers our students and families by purposefully removing limitations or barriers to their success with a supportive school environment. Our service delivery includes SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) and PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) trained staff, a mindfulness room and restorative practices. In addition, our school has extended hours, fresh cooked nutritious meal systems including breakfast, lunch and dinner and numerous wrap-around services such as embedded clinical and mental health services and strong parental engagement programming. Our school embraces every identity, every need.

However, in the state of Oregon our students and families are encountering another battle for inclusivity - as charter school students. Charter school students are public students and as a state we cannot continue to treat charter school students as 2nd class. It is hard to be separate and equal. In order to ensure success, we must strive for responsible equity.

*"At Kids Unlimited, our children are treated with respect and dignity. They are taught responsibility and citizenship in an environment where all students matter, regardless of their circumstances. There is no other school like this, it is special. I have watched my child grow as a student and as person."  
Rocio Mendoza RN Providence Medical Group, proud KUA parent.*

As leaders, **you** have the power to foster supportive and inclusive environments for our children and families. Your support can give children in this state like ours, a chance to find joy in learning, to feel empowered, to thrive and succeed.

## DEMOGRAPHICS



**47%**

English language learners

**>95%**

Free/reduced lunch

**10%**

Students with disabilities

We strive to close the achievement gap and give our students the quality education they deserve with an emphasis on the arts, technology, kinesthetic and experiential lessons. With smaller classroom sizes, longer academic days, and diverse learning curriculums, Kids Unlimited Academy maintains a commitment that every student matters.

As you work out the details of the Student Success Act we urge you to ensure that public charter schools have direct access to the planning and grants available through the School Improvement Account. By creating direct access to these grants, administered by the Oregon Department of Education, you can ensure that any student of color, any English language learner, any low-income student, or any student with a disability who attends a charter school is able to succeed and thrive.

On behalf of our children and families at Kids Unlimited Academy, I thank you for the work you are doing to make this historic \$2 billion investment in our public school students. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Cole', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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