



Co-Chairs Courtney and Kotek, Members of the Committee:

I submit this testimony in support of LC 21 on behalf of the following school districts in East Multnomah County: Centennial, Corbett, David Douglas, Gresham-Barlow, Parkrose, and Reynolds, as well as Multnomah Education Service District. We are very pleased to see LC 21 come before you.

Our districts have been working tirelessly since March to continue educating students through this pandemic, first pivoting to online learning in the spring, then comprehensive distance learning (CDL) in the fall, and now continuing with CDL while beginning to build plans for bringing students back into buildings Spring 2021 (metrics willing). School health staff have been working closely with our county public health partners to ensure that any plans for reopening follow ODE guidelines and keep our community as safe as possible. And yet, science tells us that even with strict adherence to ODE guidelines, there is the risk of a COVID transmission at one of our buildings.

This virus is highly contagious with a lengthy incubation period, and community tracing is imperfect. We are not asking for protection of negligence, but we need some certainty that if we are following the state's policies for reopening in an effort to best serve our communities, that are not also opening our districts up to potentially disastrous financial liability. Our budgets are already stretched thin by COVID, and we want to ensure that our dollars are going where they are needed most: to our students.

LC 21 offers districts some protection from all but the most necessary legal expenses and gives some peace of mind that we will be held responsible for that which we can control, but not for that which we cannot. One specific area where LC 21 is helpful on this front: protecting school districts from liability associated with allowing third-parties to use our spaces. Just as we are eager to get students back in buildings when it's safe to do so, we've had community partners inquiring whether they would be able to resume on-campus services such as before- and after-school programs. The protections offered by LC 21 allow us to feel more comfortable allowing these groups back onto our campuses, and that is a big step in ensuring that students and families get the level of services they are used to in our school buildings.

For the above reasons, I ask your support of LC 21 on behalf of the school districts in East Multnomah County.

Thank you,

Stacy Michaelson
Government Affairs Administrator