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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure: SB1552

Senate Committee on Education

As a retired public school teacher who has lived through at least three distinct cycles of national movements intent on destroying public schools, beginning in the late 1950s and continuing to the present day, I write in support of our public school system and in opposition to SB 1552. For-profit, online charter schools tried on eight separate occasions in the last legislative session to reduce or eliminate the cap on inter-district transfers from public schools to their online for-profit factories. They failed each time, but here they are again. Why? Because the profit to be gained is prodigious while the effort to produce great results is minimal. Research shows us, again and again, that the quality of online for-profit charter schools is subpar. Examples? The two largest corporations operating in Oregon had a 53% and 33% graduation rate in 2018, compared to the state average of 79% [Oregon State Report Card]. Algorithm-based machine learning is impersonal, display embedded bias, lack transparency, and most importantly reduce the all-important time between a student and their teacher.

The source of all that profit arises from the fact that, as calculated by Oregon's Department of Education, for every one half percentage change in increased student transfers to for-profit charter schools, school districts lose \$55 million in State School Fund dollars. This is money that is paid to the private consulting firms contracted with the charter schools that could have been used to compensate for the historically underfunded public school system.

I do not oppose distance learning. School districts in and outside of Oregon have developed their own district-led online programs without relying on an outside, for-profit motive. Examples include, within Oregon, the models created by the Paisley School District and the Hillsboro School District or ... in Hawaii ... the Hawaii Technology Academy. These publicly funded, local public school programs employ certified teachers from the local district who know the community and the children living in it. They also have exceptional records of success.

For these reasons I oppose SB 1552. Rather than finding ways to maximize the profit of outside corporations while strangling our own public schools, I suggest we spend more time exploring how to facilitate local, publicly-operated online schools.