

Submitter: Tanner Cropper
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB767

Honorable members of the committee, Senate Bill 767, the emergency legislation before you, seeks to limit the rights of Oregon families who desire an education suitable for their needs. This “emergency,” is in response to a charter proposal that was submitted to the Pinehurst School District by Classical Quest for Education and is an attempt to stop CQE and other future charter schools from establishing and growing brick-and-mortar in-person schools in the state of Oregon.

Senate bill 767 is the exact opposite legislation that Oregon would enact if we wanted more charter schools. Currently, a Charter School must get authorized by a school district that inevitably loses funding for each student that attends the charter school. This pits charter schools and school districts against each other from the beginning of their relationship.

Public charter schools are already at a huge funding disadvantage compared to other public schools because charter schools must pay for their facilities out of the Oregon Education budget they receive. Most other schools raise taxes and secure public bonds to pay for facilities.

Senate bill 767 is an attempt, under the guise of protecting small school districts, to protect the monopoly of large school districts who want to preserve their cash flows at the expense of families looking for diversity in education options for their community. This bill would stifle charter school opportunities and progressive changes in how the state provides diversity in brick-and-mortar education to children of Oregon.

This legislation discourages creativity and cooperation, and it reduces opportunities for educational diversity for economically disadvantaged students and effectively eliminates educational diversity in small school districts for rural families, groups who already have the fewest options.

Public charter schools are overwhelmingly popular with most families in Oregon who have school-aged children. We have diversity in restaurants and salons and pharmacies and health care providers, and Oregon families want more choices in education too.

What this legislation is proposing seems like a slight change to existing charter law, but it is a carefully crafted bill that takes away much of the practical opportunity for diversity in Oregon education, not only for rural school districts, but every bit as much for metro school districts.

Oregon Charter School law encourages creative solutions that are demanded by families. Families and children here deserve to protect themselves from the state-run schools that are not meeting their needs or keeping them safe and supported. We need more public charter schools to help the children whose needs are not being

met.

The public charter school that triggered this bill is attempting to be a diverse, full-service, K-12 school. There are 30,000 students enrolled in public school in Jackson and Josephine counties in Southern Oregon. Surveys show that more than 20,000 of these students are interested in public charter school options. Currently, less than 10% of those students have the option to consider public charter school because of the limited supply and waiting lists.

There are two main reasons Oregonians have fewer public charter schools than families want, overregulation and fees.

Many public charter schools are not allowed to grow as fast as the public wants. This cap on offering of diversity in education is hurting Oregon's enrollment numbers by reducing the number of families that are attracted to Oregon. Allowing public charter schools to serve more of Oregon students is not a loophole. Public charter schools are the solution to many of the issues in Oregon today.

Please say no to SB 767 and instead protect public charter schools and their mission to provide diversity to education in Oregon.