GRESHAM | BARLOW
WEB ACADEMY

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

HB 2457

There are sweeping assumptions regarding the funding of online/virtual schools in HB 2457. Many programs such as the Gresham-Barlow Web Academy (GBWA) serve special populations and offer many services not provided by single purpose distance learning programs. The costs of providing those supports are far beyond the online services provided by many virtual schools.

- GBWA, established in 2009, has a mission from the Gresham-Barlow School District to address the needs of "children who are not currently served by a public/private school". These students, which we estimated to be about 500, are among the home schooled, home bound or "simply stopped attending" population. Many students have come to GBWA because of personal dissatisfaction with their previous school.
- Since our beginning, three and a half years ago, we have started to attract students from many other school districts. Approximately 35-40% our student-body come from districts outside of the Gresham-Barlow School District. Students arrived from as far west as Beaverton, as far east as Hood River and as far south as Molalla.
- GBWA is a blended or hybrid program that offers classroom facilities, drop in and online tutorial service, live labs, clubs and other group programs, and off campus visits by special arrangement. Our goal is to treat each student with personalized support.
- The demands for services have caused us to move to larger facilities on the MAX line in Gresham to accommodate the students coming to us from Centennial, David Douglas, Parkrose and Portland Public schools. Costs for our facilities comes from our per student allocation not from a separate fund as with the traditional districts.
- Our services are provided by staff members that are licensed (highly qualified) in multiple subject areas. Unlike other charter schools, online programs require all teaching staff to be highly qualified. In addition we have a low ratio of counselors to students to monitor and support success.
- We serve grades 6-12. Our allocation per student is $5436. This translates to a budget of $1.875 million. With an 345 ADMw count we estimate our carry over for 12-13 fiscal year is estimated to be $54,000 (2.9%).
- Our current high school enrollment is 319 students where we serve a disproportionally high number of seniors (140). Many of these older students are 5th, 6th and, yes, 7th year students. Of those students we estimate that 75 will graduate this year. This

graduation compares with no graduates in our first year, 11 graduates in 2011 and 37 in 2012.

- Most of our juniors and seniors come to us with serious credit deficiencies. Some have a few as 3-4 credits but still want to finish school. Circumstances for their situation vary greatly but include being single parents, providing primary support for their families, working fulltime, afflicted with serious health problems, etc.
- One of our services is an early college academy for qualifying students. This dual credit situation is not provided by many school districts as it costs the entire student allocation for tuition, fees and staff support. We currently have 42 students (included in the high school count above) in the program that began last year. It serves students from 10th grade and up.
- Many students, frustrated with the long haul required to graduate, have sought to go the GED route. This program was added to our service menu this year.

In a study completed for the Northwest Center for Educational Options, it was demonstrated that **charter schools receive only 55% of the revenue per student that districts receive to serve students in traditional settings** (61.3% if you exclude revenue for debt service).

The diversity of our population, the needs of our students and an increase in population each year give credence to the importance of this program. A cut in the funding will mean that we have to cease our operation.

Please adjust this bill or send it back for further review. Passage in its current form will mean that hundreds of students will be denied an avenue to success.