

I am writing to express both support and opposition for Senate Bill 747.

I teach special education at Falcon Heights Alternative in Klamath Falls. This year, our enrollment has more than doubled. We have more and more students who are struggling in the current traditional school setting and are falling behind on credits needed for graduation. Some of these students are alternative-needs students and FHA is a great option; some of them are just *not* CDL students and will be better served at their neighborhood school when some normalcy resumes.

Even in "normal" times, we take fifth and sixth year seniors and support them through graduation. As the special education teacher, I have also had students through age 21 continuing their high school graduation requirements. Since the start of this school year, for every time I've questioned something about how schools are operating this year, I have questioned what we are going to do next year, when we have an overabundance of high school students who are not on track for graduation. Unless we are given a new building and more staff, Falcon Heights Alternative cannot take them all. However, we must as a society do something to help these students earn a diploma. On the surface, funding for an additional two years makes sense.

However, there are multiple concerns, one being funding. Two more years of education would require two more years of funding. Education is already underfunded, and we should not be taking from early childhood and elementary education to fund secondary—especially as those groups will have their own challenges in the coming years. Additionally, if this bill is to pass, it is imperative that thought goes into where and how these students will be educated—particularly, students over age 21. These students require additional consideration as it is not always possible or appropriate to have students over 21 in the same class as students who are 14. Alternative education programs, while needed and appropriate for some students, cannot be the overall solution. If they are, additional support and staff will be required to keep them operating at high standards.

Furthermore, there are concerns about transition programs. Currently, students who have special education eligibility who graduate with anything other than a regular diploma (modified, extended, certificate, or GED) are eligible for transition services through the year of their 21st birthday. Some of these students will still graduate on time. This would give them, depending on their age and birthday, up to five years of transition services instead of three. How will these students be funded and served?

I agree that we must do something to support current high school students who have struggled with CDL and need additional time and support to earn their diploma. As an alternative education special education teacher, doing this is my job every day, every year—pandemic or not. However, SB747 should not be another state directive without funding and without clear guidance as to how it will be accomplished. I urge you to talk more with the teachers and administrators who will be in charge of rolling out these plans before finalizing them.