



March 30, 2021

Chair Teresa Alonso Leon  
House Education Committee  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem Oregon 97301

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber, and Members of the Committee:

I am the Executive Director of the Arthur Academy public charter schools. There are Arthur Academy charter schools in: David Douglas, Gresham, Portland, Reynolds, St Helens-Yankton, and Woodburn. I am here today to urge your support for House Bill 2954 to empower Oregon's public charter schools to increase the diversity of their student bodies.

Oregon's public charter schools provide valuable opportunities for students who are not best served in a conventional school setting. Oregon law empowers charter schools to pursue innovative approaches to better meet students' needs, particularly those from historically underserved communities. As we work to align statute to those goals, it is important to ensure that we enable those schools to offer those services to those who can most benefit from them.

House Bill 2954 will give public charter schools the ability to better prioritize offering admission to those students that can most benefit from the learning environments they offer via a weighted lottery. It will allow these schools to select students through weighted lottery to give greater access to historically underserved students. It will also give enrollment preferences to children participating in publicly funded or free pre-school programs operated by the public charter school. And finally, it will give enrollment preferences to students at risk of academic failure.

Weighted lotteries are a proven mechanism for promoting equity in public charter school enrollment. The Century Foundation describes them as a "powerful tool from promoting diverse enrollment." Research of similar policies in New York, Illinois, Texas, and California has shown the impact of these policies. From this research, we know that students who attend more diverse schools are more likely to have diverse relationships later in life; we know that leadership skills and self-confidence tend to be enhanced; and perhaps most importantly, we know that relationships formed by students from different backgrounds affects how people treat different cultural and racial groups in the future. It is time to add this mechanism to Oregon statute, which currently only allows for preferences in admission when it comes to students with siblings already at an institution.

With our current focus on educational equity as enshrined in the Student Success Act, now is the right time to ensure the funding and strategies emerging through that legislation are complemented by policies to support greater diversity in the enrollment in our charter schools.

Please adopt House Bill 2954 and thank you for your time today.