Representative Susan McLain
House District 29

May 12, 2021

Senate Committee on Education

Re: Support for House Bill 2954

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today to ask for your support for House Bill 2954. In 2015 the Oregon legislature passed Senate Bill 820 which allowed public charter schools to operate a weighted lottery for enrollment of students, included a sunset for January 2020, and was intended to be revisited in February 2020. Due to various external factors the 2020 Oregon legislature was unable to revisit extending this option for public charter schools.

This legislation was developed ***to allow public charter schools another tool to help increase student diversity, better serve the students in their communities, and fulfill their mission.***

Weighted lotteries benefit Oregon charter schools by helping charter schools increase the diversity of their student bodies. Historically underserved students will experience more equitable access to these rich educational opportunities and all students will experience a richer learning environment. And, according to the Century Foundation, such learning environments lead to stronger academic outcomes.

Current Oregon Charter School enrollment law only allows schools to give priority for admission to students who have enrolled siblings. HB 2954 will allow public charter schools to:
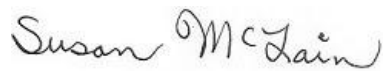
- Select students through a weighted lottery that provides greater access for historically underserved students

- Give enrollment preference to children participating in a publicly funded or free preschool program operated by the public charter school

- Give enrollment preference to students who are at risk for academic failure

I would like to thank Iris Chavez for helping to craft this legislation, and Representative Reardon and Senators Dembrow, Riley, and Steiner Hayward for their support of this bill. Please support HB2954.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan McLain

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