



Allison Galvin
Executive Director

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Chair Dembrow, Members of the Senate Education Committee:

For the record, I am Allison Galvin, Executive Director at Oregon Charter Academy. Oregon Charter Academy is the state's most tenured nonprofit, independently run virtual public charter school serving students in Oregon for 17 years. Thank you for hearing SB 1552 and for the opportunity to share the importance of removing barriers that families and students face in seeking access to quality virtual K-12 education.

Tenants of education in our state have emphasized the importance of equitable access to public education. The Oregon Department of Education's (ODE) mission statement is, "*The Oregon Department of Education fosters equity and excellence for every learner through collaboration with educators, partners, and communities.*" **Fosters equity** is the first value in this mission. This focus on equity is critical work within our educational system. The National School Boards Association (NSBA) states that, "*Public schools should provide equitable access and ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills to succeed as contributing members of a rapidly changing, global society, regardless of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, English proficiency, immigration status, socioeconomic status, or disability.*" **Equitable access** is the first value mentioned by NSBA.

The unfortunate reality is that in Oregon students have inequitable access to options within our public school system that will enable them to succeed. SB 1552 provides one critical remedy by removing the cap on virtual charter school enrollment.

There is a lot of misinformation shared about our virtual schools in Oregon. We are not "for profit" schools and the majority are not managed by for-profit corporations. We are not trying to "take" students away from their local districts. Our role is to provide a free public school option that is right for many students who have not thrived in other settings.

I have worked within virtual education in our state for eleven years. I have heard the term "for-profit" used as why the three percent enrollment cap should not change. This term is inaccurate. Over 75% of virtual charter schools are independent Oregon based schools where full operations of the school happen at the local school level in Oregon. This independent model includes Oregon Charter Academy.

Another misnomer is that virtual charter schools "fail" students. Generally, virtual schools serve different students than local community schools. This is intentional. We as virtual schools do not believe we are right for every student or will ever replace our district community schools. That is not, and never will be the role of virtual charter schools in our state. We do, however, fill a niche



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for students who need something other than their traditional school. It is important to understand that virtual charter schools serve a much higher percentage of students in mobility, or students who have transferred at any point during their high school career. ODE has shared that the statewide graduation rate for these students is approximately 50%. Oregon Charter Academy's graduation rate for those same students in mobility is nearly 10% higher.

Our focus is to provide an alternative option for families when their local bricks and mortar setting is not the right fit. We are held to the same standards as local districts and actually have more requirements for reporting. Like most public schools in Oregon, we are accredited by Cognia, formerly known as AdvancEd. I am honored to share that going through this same accreditation process as the other public schools in Oregon, we received a score of **377.5 out of 400**. The average score is 278-283. The accreditation team was so impressed with how we holistically serve students, they honored us as an International School of Distinction, the only school in Oregon and the west coast to receive this honor. We stand by our quality, we have the capacity to serve more students, and we know, hearing from parents and students today, that the need exists. The only factor standing in the way of our school helping these students succeed is an arbitrary 3% cap based on the geography of where they live.

Equity is paramount in our education system. We have a real opportunity to right an inequity with SB 1552. Address should not determine whether families are afforded access to public educational options.

I appreciate your intention to convene a work group in the interim to examine the governance, standards and accessibility of virtual charter schools and would value the opportunity to engage in this important work.

Thank you for the chance to come before the committee today, and with that I would be happy to answer any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Galvin".

Allison Galvin
Executive Director
Oregon Charter Academy