

Submitter: Mary Marshall
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB767

My children attend Lewis and Clark Montessori Charter School (LCMCS), which is sponsored by the Gresham Barlow School District (GBSD). This fall, LCMCS received notice that GBSD was terminating the lease at the current building. The administration and board of directors have worked incredibly quickly to identify a building large enough to safely house 17 classrooms for our nearly 400 students by September 2023. LCMCS would love to retain our current building within the GBSD boundaries, but GBSD has removed that option.

Despite the obvious shortage of 30,000+ square foot buildings available on the market, our leadership has identified a property less than 1/2 mile from the GBSD boundary. The purchase agreement has been signed and the due diligence period is underway. The building would represent a permanent home for a vibrant community of students, faculty, and parents. As a bonus, the new location would make charter Montessori an option for many GBSD students who otherwise could not travel to our current building, which is located in the more rural portion of GBSD.

Passage of SB 767 would penalize our school for making the very best out of a horrible and unexpected situation. As a community, we would love to be located inside the boundaries, but we have not been able to find a new in-district home in the few brief months we've had to look. Instead, we've done our best to be as close as possible to the students of GBSD. From a location perspective, the potential new barely-out-of-district building is more accessible for most GBSD students than the current location.

I understand the need to keep a school district's resources in the district, but an emergent action like SB 767 would add additional uncertainty for many schools like LCMCS that are in the midst of negotiating major transactions. Our leadership has made a good faith effort to keep our school as close as possible to GBSD. GBSD students retain priority enrollment. Our community is invested in becoming an integral part of our new neighborhood.

I hope you will reconsider this bill, which abruptly alters the parameters under which school boards have operated with their sponsored charters. However, should the body determine this bill is necessary to prevent future charter school moves, I urge you to amend to allow a more reasonable grace period for schools who are already navigating unexpected transitions to new locations. Our school community is doing the very best we can to continue offering a high quality education for GBSD students who benefit from the montessori approach. Please allow time for schools to have

some certainty in their planning efforts and, at a minimum, change the effective date of SB 767 to grandfather schools that are already engaged in plans for a transition.