

Submitter: Elizabeth Pratt-Russum
On Behalf Of: Lewis and Clark Montessori Charter School
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB767

Hi, I'm writing today in opposition of this bill. My children have attended Lewis & Clark Montessori Charter School for 2 years, and we are heartbroken that their future there may be in jeopardy. When my oldest child began, he was multiple years behind in reading, writing, and math due to a learning disability and the COVID shutdown. He has an IEP, and struggles with intense anxiety. Since he began there, he has blossomed! He is now at grade level and thriving. It is all thanks to his wonderful teachers and this amazing school.

The Lewis & Clark Montessori Charter School is being forced to relocate due to lease termination by our sponsoring district, Gresham-Barlow School District and while it would be ideal for us to remain inside GBSD boundaries there is an extremely limited time frame and lack of existing facilities to accommodate 17 classrooms so our choices are limited. We only learned of this lease termination a few months ago so it has been a huge effort on the part of the entire community to find a new space. The school has been searching tirelessly and now have a proposed new facility that is located less than 1000 ft from the GBSD boundary.

We would like to turn an unfortunate situation into a positive impact by moving from a rural location that is inaccessible by public transportation to one that opens access for enrollment to the underserved, more diverse populations in Rockwood and the surrounding area while also continuing to serve our current families. Greater access & diversity is a key component of our current Strategic Plan.

Lewis & Clark Montessori Charter School has been in existence for over 14 years and has had an incredibly positive impact on hundreds of families, educators and the greater community.

If our school has nowhere else to go and we're forced to cease operations in our new building, what then? Hundreds, if not thousands of children (considering the impact this will have on several other charter schools statewide) will be put into their local elementary schools. Schools that are already bursting at the seams with sky high classroom numbers while simultaneously hemorrhaging their best and brightest teachers due to the environment of the last few years. Our children's education and spirit took a big enough hit with Covid restrictions these past few years, it's time we started showing up for them and supporting them in all their educational endeavors.

Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Pratt-Russum, Parent of Kade and Lucia who attend Lewis & Clark Montessori Charter School