

Submitter: Peter Jensen
On Behalf Of: Lewis and Clark Montessori Charter School
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB767

Lewis & Clark Montessori Public Charter School is a special place where students come to find who they are by being given the opportunity, time and space to follow their own curiosity, interests and inner passions to deep and meaningful places. With students healthy development at the forefront and purposeful work as a key pathway, Lewis & Clark Montessori graduates are lifelong learners who know how to be productive members of a local community and citizens of a global society.

Founded 14 years ago by a group of parents wanting a choice and alternative approach to their children's education, Lewis & Clark Montessori has continued to provide something different and an accessible option to Montessori education for families in the Gresham and East County area. This school is a place that prides itself on meeting children where they are and a place where all are welcome.

Lewis & Clark Montessori is a school that sees interconnections and engages with and gives back to its larger surrounding community. There is so much positive energy and constructive community value in one place it is hard to imagine it going away because of a law that further restricts its ability to exist.

This school has faced several challenges over the years like being consistently underfunded and under-resourced. Having our long term lease terminated prematurely and part way into the current school year by our sponsoring district is an existential one for Lewis & Clark Montessori. Running the daily operations of a combined preschool, elementary and middle school while trying to find a suitable facility for next year is a monumental task. Time is not on our side and there just are not that many options to choose from that are affordable, will allow us to retain most of our families, and serve our needs as a Montessori school. One viable option we have found is a building we are planning to purchase that sits less than half a mile outside our sponsoring district. SB 767 if passed would potentially prevent Lewis & Clark Montessori from being able operate at this location next school year and to chart its own path to greater independence and long term sustainability. The loss of Lewis & Clark Montessori would not just negatively impact our students, families and staff but our local communities and the educational ecosystem in Oregon.