

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

To the esteemed Education Committee and Lawmakers of Oregon:

I am a parent and volunteer at Lewis and Clark Montessori Charter School. Two of my children attend school here (soon to be three) and are thriving in this unique learning environment. The school serves many low-income and minority families and is an absolute asset to the community, as this high level of education is typically unaffordable to most middle and lower class families.

Recently we learned our lease would not be renewed and have been forced to relocate to another building. After a diligent search by our admin, a facility adequate for our needs has been located a mere 1,000 feet from our district boundary. This building is an opportunity for our school to have a permanent home AND serve still more low income and minority families in its new location.

The independence and confidence this school imparts is crucial for the next generation of “out of the box” thinkers and problem-solvers. Recently, with the help of a generous grant and new partnership with a charitable foundation, LCMCS has developed an emotionally intelligent, cultural music exchange program with another school across the globe in Kenya. This endeavor aims to heal the damaging effects of the isolation experienced by students during the pandemic, as well as expand their understanding and tolerance of other cultures and communities. The specialized music theory and small group instrument instruction is entirely free regardless of ability and economic status. Preliminary surveys suggest that overall students feel happier and less stressed since the inception of the program. Through rigorous scientific studies, we know that excess stress shuts down learning. Less stress means better info retention in other subjects. Partnering with the school’s own woodshop, students will learn to make their own marimbas and play “together” with their new Mirema friends. This program has become a reality through the support and flexibility of LCMCS.

We strongly feel that charter schools like ours, with their unique curriculum and flexible learning models are essential for the children who don’t thrive in a traditional setting. This gives the brilliant mathematical mind with significant speech delay the support needed to develop as needed while cultivating their gifts, or the ADHD child flexibility to take a quick run with a teacher between lessons to refocus, the children with autism and sensory processing challenges a calm, quiet, safe space to do their best work.

Never have I seen such a solid administrative, teaching, nutrition and support staff. LCMCS is for everyone, lifting up the entire community by catering to the kids who tend to “fall through the cracks”. SB 767 would absolutely shatter all that has been carefully and intentionally built by the community, for the community. What will happen to these children who cannot succeed in the traditional setting? We beg you to vote no so we don't have to find out.