

February 1, 2023

RE: SB 767

Dear Senate Committee on Education and Honorable Chair Dembro:

Thank you for your work on behalf of public education and for hearing this important issue.

As you know, there is currently no law prohibiting a brick-and-mortar comprehensive charter school from opening in one district and operating its campuses in another district. Senate Bill 767 would keep this from happening in Oregon. In the Medford School District, we are currently facing just such a situation as the John Adams Academy is applying to be a charter school within the rural, K-5 Pinehurst School District (which has one school with fewer than 20 students) with the intention to open a "satellite" campus within the Medford School District boundaries.

I want to make it clear the Medford School District is very supportive of school choice and has four thriving charter schools that operate within our district boundaries. John Adams Academy applied to operate in our district, but withdrew its application before the Board had an opportunity to consider it.

My concern about John Adams Academy opening a comprehensive, publicly funded school that is chartered by another Oregon public school district within the boundaries of the Medford School District comes after we considered a similar move a few years ago. Soon after I became superintendent in MSD, one of our charter schools was interested in expanding into another school district. We began exploring that possibility, but before we took the matter to our school board for consideration, we had a conversation with the other school district. When we did so, instead of forcing a comprehensive school into another public school district, we connected the charter school with the district, and the charter school followed the process to become a charter school in that district. When we reflected on the situation, we realized that the ultimate outcome was the proper approach: keeping publicly funded charter schools within the public school district boundaries.

Sponsoring a charter school is complex and costly. Many services are provided by the sponsoring district and some of the associated costs, such as special education services, are unknowable because they are determined by individual student needs. Relationships between the chartering district and the charter school matter. Proximity matters.

Having a public school within our boundaries over which our Board and administration has no authority or oversight is a recipe for confusion for the community and frustration for families. For example, would Academy students play sports or other extracurricular events in Pinehurst or be under the misimpression that they would play on our teams, given the facility is in the Medford School District? Would families need to drive 40 miles for special education services and evaluation?

For these reasons, we support amending the existing law to ensure comprehensive brick-and-mortar charter schools are chartered by the district in which they reside.

Thank you for considering this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bret A. Champion". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bret Champion  
Superintendent  
Medford School District

