

Submitter: jenine Balmforth
On Behalf Of: Lewis and Clark Montessori
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB767

Hi, I'm writing today in opposition of this bill. Our child has attended Lewis & Clark Montessori Charter School for her entire school career(she is currently in 6th grade) and we are heartbroken to hear that her future there may be in jeopardy. The 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.

Furthermore, on a more personal note , our daughter has been identified as a neurodiverse individual who has been diagnosed with dyslexia and other learning challenges. Lewis and Clark Montessori has provided a nurturing , wholistic and academically successful environment for my very challenging complicated daughter. Most recently they added an onsite mental health clinic for children to receive mental health therapy and this has been instrumental in my daughters ability to cope with her daily challenges. She is able to receive onsite weekly therapy during the school day and this alleviates the need to find transportation and appointment times after school . Trying to find another school placement where my daughter could continue to thrive would be next to impossible at this point . I have no doubt the schools plan

to purchase the proposed building would be an asset to the local community by providing an equitable educational opportunity to local underserved populations. They also offer so many extra opportunities that many schools do not have funding/staff allocated to provide. Some of these programs include small group instrument lessons, a cultural music exchange program with a school in Africa through video diaries and a shared music curriculum. Lewis and Clark also provides a dynamic art education which personally motivate and helps my daughter stay engaged with her peers. taking this environment and stability away from my daughter at this point would be detrimental to her continued progress. Thank you for your attention to this matter