

Submitter: Rachel prusak
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB2767

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and members of the House Committee on Education:

I am proud to write in support of House Bill 2767 and the -2 amendment. In the 2022 Legislative Session, I had the privilege of advocating for a one-time, \$1 million investment to support Oregon's existing recovery high school, Harmony Academy, and the work of identifying the best path forward for expanding schools like Harmony across the state.

Harmony Academy, which is in my district and which will always hold a special place in my heart, was the first school of its kind to pop up in Oregon. The mission of Harmony Academy is to provide a safe, sober and supportive gold standard education for youth in recovery from substance use disorder and other co-occurring disorders, where they can develop the skills and strengths needed for personal, academic, vocational and community success. When Harmony was founded in 2019 it was opened under Oregon's charter school law, because no other model for recovery schools existed at the time.

HB 2767 will put that statewide model into place for recovery high schools and guarantee that these schools have access to the funding and technical supports they need to thrive long-term. The recommended model in HB 2767 came out of a cross-agency workgroup I had the honor of convening over the last interim, which consisted of brilliant experts in health care, education, recovery, youth development and more.

This workgroup met for several months to answer some big questions: how do we fund recovery schools in a more sustainable way? How can we govern recovery schools to ensure they are following all the appropriate recovery accreditation standards as well as Oregon's highest educational and academic standards? How can we guarantee that every student in recovery has access to a safe, supportive educational environment that meets both their health care and their academic needs?

HB 2767 is the answer to those questions – creating a pilot program for governing recovery schools through the Oregon Department of Education, and giving the Department access to resources from the Statewide Education Initiatives Account to help pay for these students.

As a health care provider, a former legislator, and someone who has witnessed the horrors of substance use disorder time and time again, I have a deep understanding

of how important it is that Oregon begin investing in recovery services. We cannot keep waiting. It is absolutely critical that Oregon invest in proven, life-saving programs like recovery high schools.

I continue to be deeply committed to this work and I am grateful for your committee's consideration and ability to move this concept ahead this legislative session.

I urge your support for House Bill 2767 and ask that you vote YES on this critically-needed, thoughtfully-created legislation.

Thank you,

Rachel Prusak
Former State Representative | HD 37