



Chair Neron, Vice-Chair Wright, Vice-Chair Hudson, and members of the House Committee on Education.

My name is Hugh Ady and I'm the Executive Director of Better Public Education, a nonprofit association dedicated to improving Oregon's public education system.

Better Public Education strongly supports House Bill 4161. The purpose of Oregon's public education system is straightforward: to deliver the best education possible for the estimated 575,000 students currently enrolled. However, in a state with 197 school districts and more than 1,200 public schools, the sad reality is too many students have fallen behind or slipped through the cracks.

Innovation in education is critical to lifting those most vulnerable students and getting them back on track. House Bill 4161 aims to do exactly that. It contains three policy components. Two of them are not new to Oregon, one of them would be. Virtual public charter schools are available in a number of school districts and lifting the cap to 6 percent would simply expand access to those schools for students who excel in an online environment. Open enrollment existed in Oregon for nearly a decade, and public-school choice would provide parents and their children with the flexibility to seek out a public school that may work better for their student. House Bill 4161 also provides school districts with the option of withdrawing from open enrollment and makes clear that a student would only be able to transfer to a public school in another school district if the receiving school has the capacity.

The third and final component of House Bill 4161 is the Education Savings Account. This program is income targeted. It is not available for the wealthiest Oregon families, but instead addresses the immediate need of those low-income and middle-class families who have a student that is struggling in a traditional classroom setting.

We recognize that the vast majority of Oregon students won't attend a virtual public charter school, won't use open enrollment to transfer to another public school, and won't utilize an Education Savings Account. But for that small fraction of Oregon public school students who do, they'll have the opportunity to meet their unique education needs and thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.