



February 14, 2023
Chair Courtney Neron
House Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Testimony in support of HB4161

Dear Chair Neron, Vice Chair Hudson, Vice Chair Wright and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Tricia Powell and I live in Roseburg. I am a virtual public charter school parent and the President of the Oregon Virtual Public Schools Alliance (OVPSA), a coalition of parents who have joined together to advocate for our education choice. I am testifying in support of HB4161. I will specifically direct my comments to subsection (5) of the bill which raises the enrollment cap on virtual public charter schools to 6%.

In 2011, the Oregon State Legislature placed a cap of 3% on the number of kids in a school district that can transfer to virtual public charter schools. Policies like the 3% percent enrollment cap have prohibited thousands of Oregon students from seeking this proven education option. While access to these schools has been a challenge since the 3% enrollment cap was enacted more than 10 years ago, the pandemic accelerated this problem. Since 2020, we have heard from students in school districts around the state who were denied enrollment in virtual public charter schools because their district hit the 3% cap.

I applaud Rep. McIntire and Rep. Cramer for their leadership on HB3204, which made administrative changes to the enrollment cap process. While that 2023 legislation was an important first step in leveling the playing field for students seeking to enroll in a virtual public charter school, the OVPSA would like to see the cap raised or removed to expand access for more students. As a legislative body that is committed to access, equity and fairness in education, it's disappointing that access, equity and fairness seemingly don't apply to students currently enrolled or seeking to enroll in a virtual public charter school.

Chair Neron, thank you for holding this hearing. I appreciate your fairness and openness to discussions on the enrollment cap. The last several years have been especially challenging for Oregon students, but we are lucky to have great virtual public charter schools that are working well for our students. Virtual public charter schools aren't for everyone, but they need to be available to anyone who chooses to utilize them. It's time for legislators to support parents and students, whether they're already in a virtual charter school or seeking admission. Please do what's best for Oregon families and raise the enrollment cap on virtual public charter schools. I look forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tricia F. Powell".

Tricia Powell
President

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